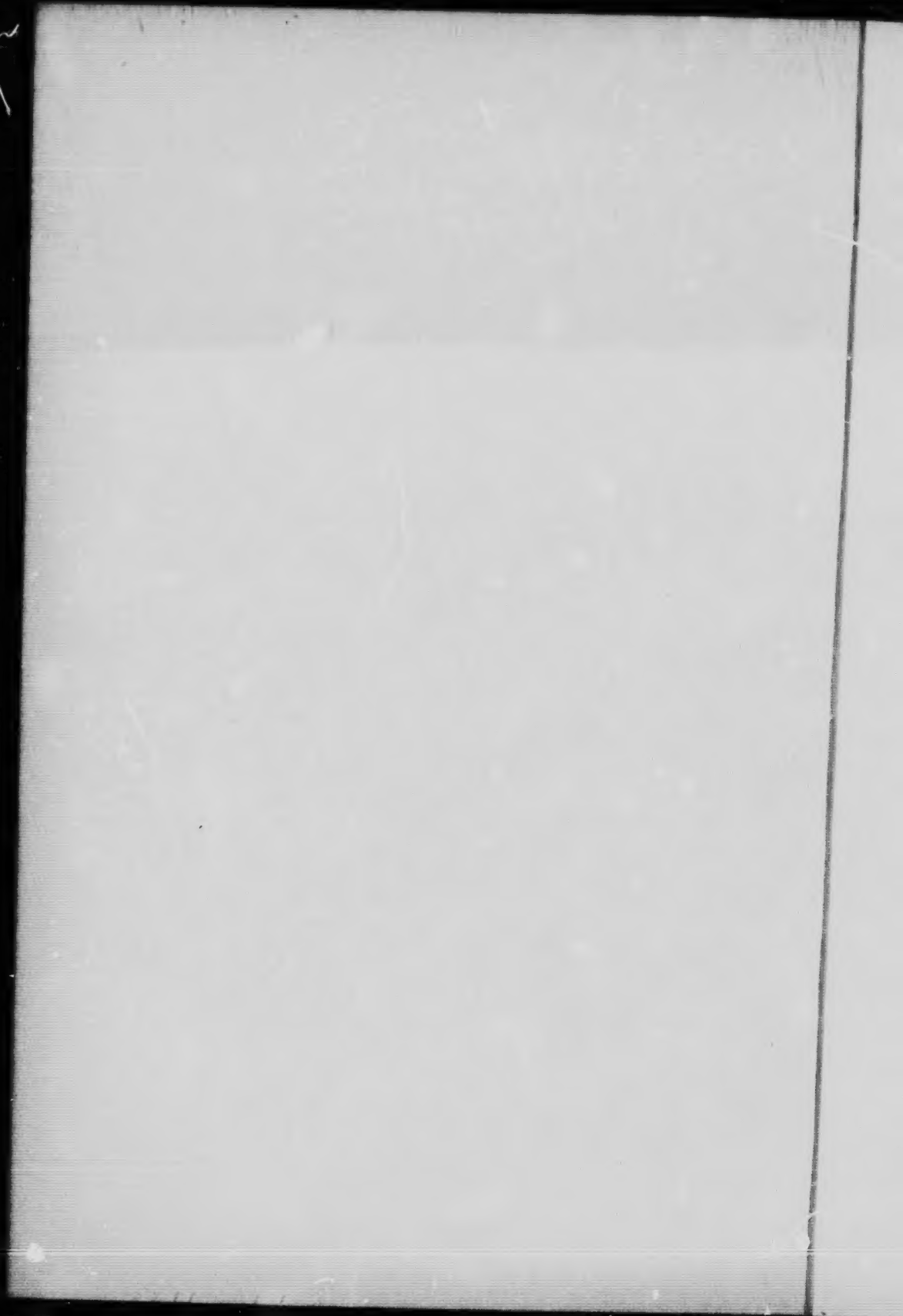


THE GOLDEN HAWK

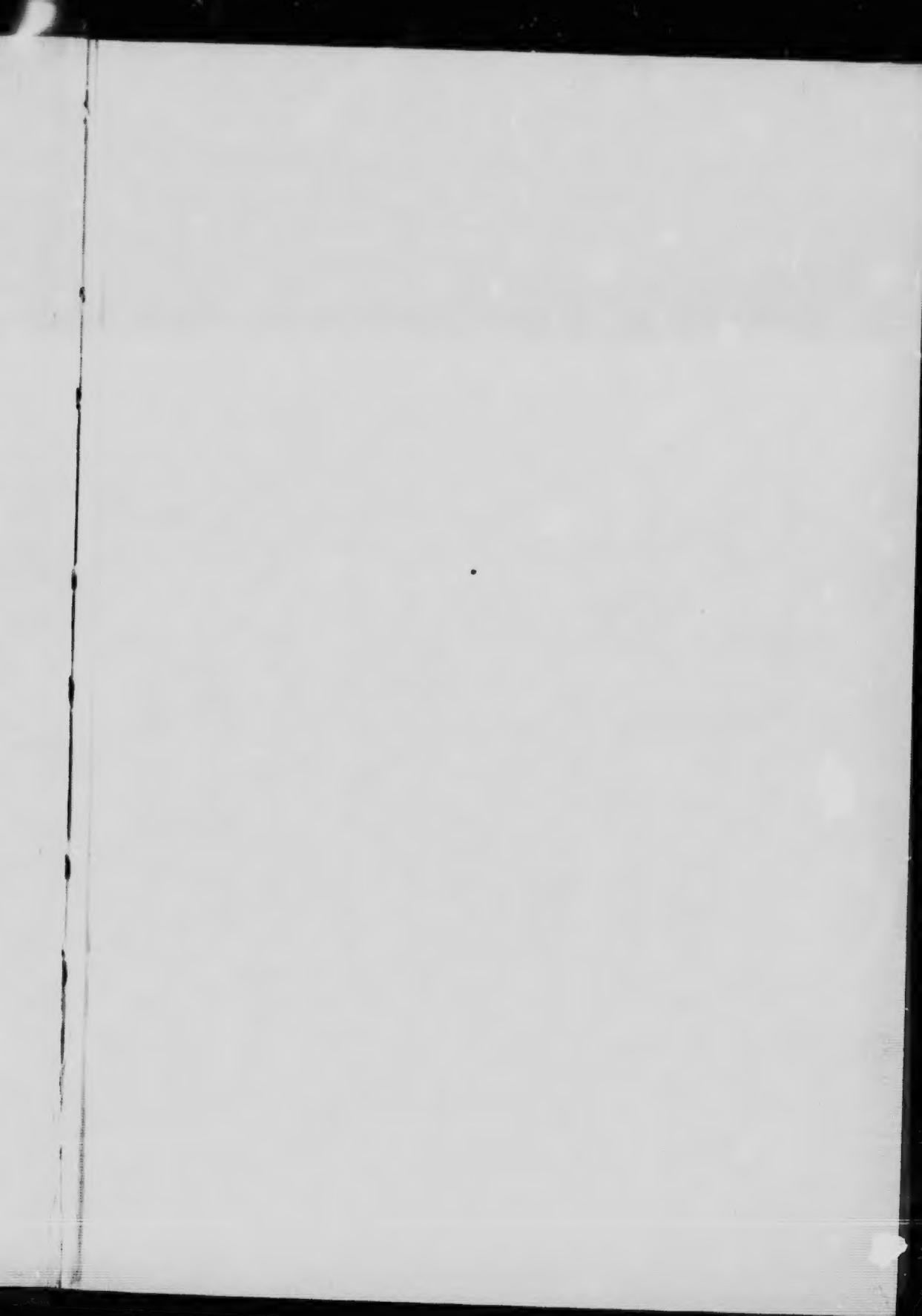


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THE GOLDEN HAWK





The Golden Hawk

BY

EDITH RICKERT

Author of "Folly" and "The Reaper"

"La pichouneto escaramouche."—MISTRAL
("Much Ado about Nothing.")

TORONTO
THE MUSSON BOOK COMPANY
LIMITED



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Ca

MISTRAL

IN MEMORY OF THE TIME WHEN HE READ
TO ME OF MIREIO, THIS TALE, WHICH
IS OVERBOLD IN COMING FORTH
FROM THE ROOM IN WHICH HE
AND DAUDET SANG AND
TALKED TOGETHER

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE UPWARD FLIGHT	9
II. THE WAY OF IT	19
III. THE PERILOUS LADDER OF LOVE	30
IV. THE SILVER RING	40
V. THE HEART OF MADELOUN	50
VI. THE BEGINNING OF THE SIEGE	63
VII. THE LETTER	69
VIII. THREE TO ONE	81
IX. THE PROMISE	89
X. THE BIRD IN THE NET	98
XI. THE RETURN OF THE HAWK	108
XII. THE KNOCKING AT THE DOOR	116
XIII. THE VIGIL	125
XIV. THE FALCON AND THE NIGHTINGALES	131
XV. TRILLON GROWS RICH	140
XVI. THE SECOND RETURN OF TRILLON	150
XVII. WHAT MAY BE DONE AT A DÉJEUNER	157
XVIII. THE THIRD RETURN OF TRILLON	165
XIX. THE PIT OF ARTABAN	173
XX. ALL FOR A CUP OF MILK	181
XXI. SETTLING IN	188
XXII. THE CLEARING OF THE LAND	195
XXIII. HOW THE WORK WENT ON	201
XXIV. VISITORS AT THE MAS	209
XXV. DISCOVERY	221
XXVI. THE END OF THE LONG WHITE ROAD	228
XXVII. THE DISPOSITION OF MADELOUN	238

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXVIII. BREAKFAST AT THE PRESBYTERY	245
XXIX. MADELOUN DOUBTS	252
XXX. A CURIOUS END TO AN ODD CHAPTER	260
XXXI. THE NEWS THAT RAMOUN BROUGHT	267
XXXII. MADNESS AT THE WINDMILL	275
XXXIII. LITTLE GAMES OF LOVE	286
XXXIV. THE CLIFF OF BRIAZON	292
XXXV. THE CHAPEL OF THE MARIES	302
XXXVI. QUARRY OR WELL?	311
XXXVII. THE EMPEROR OF THE EAST	318
XXXVIII. THE CONQUEST OF THE CHURCH	328
XXXIX. A LITTLE DRAMA IN THE PLACE	337
XL. BALIN-BALANT	345

THE GOLDEN HAWK

CHAPTER I

THE UPWARD FLIGHT

IT is legend that the Golden Hawk — if there be such a bird — is distinguished among his kind by the love that drives him to fly straight into the heart of the sun. And of this parable the meaning is that so royal is his nature, it pierces at once to the quick of his desire, and suffers no mist, no tempest, to obscure the light from his eyes. Among men, young Trillon, who some few years since set one small corner of Provence pretty well a-talking, adopted this emblem as his own. With what right? You shall judge.

He began his upward flight one spring morning, with a bravura that rivalled the sun, splendid in golden brown corduroy trousers set with rows of silver-gilt buttons, with a coat of the same flung across his left shoulder, with a gaudy-striped flannel shirt, a white felt hat of many angles, a ribbon, a sash, a scarf of saffron hue, and white sandals worked with ruddy chestnut. Moreover, he himself is of a beautiful brown, golden-haired, and with eyes that readily catch fire and blaze.

It was only April when he left the plains where mauve

THE GOLDEN HAWK

wistaria drooped heavily against the yellow house walls, and irises lined the shady garden-paths, where the Judas-trees already had their purple flecked with summer dust, while the delicate tamarisks waved their feathers of bluish rose in the cold north wind from the Alps. But when he had left beneath his feet the flower-fields, the plane-trees, the olives, and the cypresses, and begun to climb among the limestone boulders, he came into the full domain of the sun, and it seemed midsummer. But so far was he from shrinking that he bared his head to the tropic heat, lifted his hawk-nose high in the aroma of rosemary and thyme, and faced the lord of all living things, eye to eye. And so he climbed away from the habitations of men, scrambling among rocks red or silvery, wading through fragrant herbs, faint-blue *roumanin*, lavender, *ferigoulo*, cytissus, wild rose, and box and gorse, until all the plains melted into a purple as of the sea, not so much for great height as for the mirage that touches with splendour this south-land.

All the way, the heart of Trillon was singing, for his world was not far in its twenties, and with a violin slung across his shoulders he aped the troubadour.

But although no far gleam of that sweet country escaped his roving eyes, he showed ever an out-thrust lip and jaw that betokened some end towards which he climbed and climbed — this son of old Trillon of the sausage-shop, built against the Porte Barbentane, in the shadow of the Popes' Castle at Avignon. *Pecaire!* he never lacked purpose of one sort or another, or tongue to tell it, or means to bring it to conclusion.

THE UPWARD FLIGHT

And so he climbed, threading his way in and out among the quarries; and the mood of the place grew so within him that he drew forth his violin and picked its strings as he walked, to the tune of old lays and catches, sometimes ribald, sometimes sweet. Now and again the quarrymen 'looked out from their high black caverns, cut square like Egyptian temples, to pass the time of day, with rough chaffing on the style of his music.

He had already left them far below when, with a sudden twist in the hill, he came out from behind a wind-hewn pyramid a hundred feet high or more, and looked across at the city of his quest. His notes ended in a sudden rasp. He dropped upon a huddle of stones, his violin across his knee, and stared, as silent and as unmoving as the rocks themselves.

It lay high — oh, it lay high, the city of Castelar, high above the narrow green valley that slit the two mountain-ridges — this was the thought that ran through his head. But high as they had built it, a thousand years ago and more, those ancient lords of all the plain between the Alps and the sea and the two rivers, he built yet higher the castle of his dreams, that was after to be founded on rock, and carved out of limestone, when the will to achieve grew strong within him. This day, he sat and looked his fill at the grey ramparts and wind-beaten hollow dwellings, at the faded yellow tile-roofs, and the shadowy crooked streets that climb up to the church spire; and following the line of this against the green sward of the castle plateau, his eyes were led up and up to the broken walls of the donjon and the pinnacles of ancient watch-towers that

THE GOLDEN HAWK

seemed to pierce the wind-streaked blue. And beyond the rock of Castelar, and through the chinks of its high chasms, he looked into impenetrable distance where sky and earth and sea are one, and the colour of them blended is like no other hue in the world.

From this place he may have seen the slip of green that marks the garden of Auzias Borel; but he had no dimmest notion, as he leaped down from the rocks, and followed the highroad, curving and doubling on its steep way round the valley, that he was walking as straight as might be to the destination of his dream.

Now you must know that by this time it was afternoon, and on the edge of the ramparts of Castelar, under an almond-tree, three girls, snugly sheltered from sun and wind, bent over their sewing.

A sweeter garden or one more strange you would not readily find. Old Auzias Borel, landlord of the *Cabro d'Or* — the Golden Goat of legendary fame — having the serviceable eye of a Greek, some years since had acquired the house next to his own, which — you will scarcely believe me — was left much as it stood when Richelieu had battered it down, and hence was not suitable to live in. But Borel wanted it for a garden. At the foot of the broken steps, whereon grow wall-flowers, is the old courtyard under the ramparts, with its ancient well and stone troughs; and this is set out with plants that love damp and shade and cannot endure the too fierce alchemy of the sun, iris and lilac and black-berried ivy, lilies and pansies, and some kitchen herbs. In one corner, at the end of a pergola over-run with trumpet-flower, is

THE UPWARD FLIGHT

a stone bench and a broken statue of the Virgin, found when the garden was first dug. And here, before this strange pagan Madonna — a goddess of fruitfulness with bursting cornucopia instead of Child, and yet a Virgin too, unmistakably — here it was that Madaleno sometimes came to pray.

Up above, on the cellar roofs of the old mansion, Borel coaxed a few vegetables and fruits, tomatoes and cucumbers and a few gourds, a handful of peas and a fig-tree on the southern wall. Here and there among the young growing things are set up, just where they were found, fragments of old statues and other chisel-work, made many centuries ago at the bidding of a prince; and the outer wall where the three girls sat sewing is pierced by a stout almond-tree that thrives upon air and stone, and scatters its ripe black shells along the grass-paths.

Madaleno and Nerto and Jano-Marjo were pricking seams and talking of their future, as girls will do. Jano-Marjo always parted her brown hair straight and plain under the white muslin and dark blue fillet of Arles. Nerto had set aside the ancient fashion and caught up her dark curls into puffs, with many combs. Madaleno, who had the blackest hair of all, kept to the pretty, quaint cap, but tricked it out with silver pins; and set off the dusky cloud beneath it with silver stars in her ears, and the clearness of her throat by an enamel butterfly brought all the way from far Marseilles.

As they sat behind the parapet in the shade of the almond-tree, the tongue of Nerto kept time with the needle of Jano-Marjo; but Madaleno had let her sewing fall, and

THE GOLDEN HAWK

leaned with crossed arms looking beyond the valley. There was nothing to interest her in the few olives and mulberries that struggled for a footing between the limestone and the firs in the strip of green vale; nor did she watch the dusty flock nibbling its way, with many soft tinkles, on the upland pastures beyond. She did not turn to the jagged peaks of the range that cut off the valley, or to the purple plains and silvery marshes that might carry one's thought to the other side of the world. She was absorbed in the long white curves of the dusty highroad, which ended in the gate under her rampart, for that way — that way alone — must her fortune come. And although she was but seventeen, she thought already that it tarried long.

So she watched, dreaming and not seeing the reality that drew near; and so he came, awestruck for the first time in his life by the silence of the little rock-city, as grey, as numb as a sleeper that shall never awake. It was perhaps to comfort himself, and to frighten away his own fears, that he picked again at the strings of his violin, and hummed a little to himself as he passed along. In this strain he came under the rampart, where long ago pilgrims and merchants waited until the great Porte should be unbarred; and he looked up, even as she, stirred from her dreams by the wandering music, leaned over downwards.

It was by no effort of the will that his desultory air took to itself the words of an old song:

"O Magali, ma tant amado."

The dark eyes smiled down at him not unkindly; and I

THE UPWARD FLIGHT

do assure you they had need, for he sang well, and well enough.

"The stars pale before thee," he assured her; and she, never lacking in quickness of mockery, played her part and flung at him the old words:

"I care no more for thy song than for the wind among the branches; and to escape thee I shall jump into the sea and turn eel among the rocks."

From this, they had it back and forth, now in the way of the song, now of their own wit, in a kind of musical sparring as old as love itself.

"I shall turn fisherman and net thee."

O the dimple that came and went in each cheek, as she cooed over the wall:

"But as soon as thou dost throw thy nets, I shall turn bird and fly away across the plains."

"Leloun, Madeloun," whispered Nerto, plucking at her sleeve; but Jano-Marìo sewed on, after a bare glance at the sparkling but dusty troubadour in the road below.

But when he vowed that he would turn *chasseur* and would catch the precious bird; and added, of his own, with a sudden leap into the air and click of the heels together, "For I am the hawk of Avignon, and the falcon is swift and sure," she answered with gay laughter:

"Partridges thou mayst catch and hedge-warblers; but I shall be safe — a flower among the grasses of the prairie."

"The brook," says he — "I shall be the brook that bathes thy feet."

At this she blushed and caught up her sewing, and wrought three bad stitches; but compulsion was upon

THE UPWARD FLIGHT

the broken rampart mastered that he sat, shaking with laughter, astride the parapet, before a little frozen group of fear: Jano-Marìo with her needle in mid-air, Nerto with her face buried on Madeloun's shoulder, and she, the bravest of them, with her hands at her mouth, as if to choke back a cry.

"Sing — why don't you sing?" he demanded, beating one gaily-sandalled foot against the earth, while the other hung in mid-air.

"Santo Marìo Saloumè, he is quite mad," said Jano-Marìo slowly, while Madeloun turned her face away in silence.

Deliberately he unpacked again his shining fiddle, and this time, its bow; and he went alone through the song to the end. Were she the forest oak, himself would be the ivy — and here Nerto, familiar as was the song, recovered herself in laughing at the image. Were she even a white nun in the convent of St. Blaise, he would turn father confessor. Yes, he said, if he found her in her winding-sheet, dead among all the White Sisters, he would be the very earth, and in the end she should be his own.

In the silence that followed, he made a great business of packing away his instrument. Nerto withdrew to the doorway of the house, and Jano-Marìo folded up her work, as if thinking of flight; but Madeloun came a little forward, one hand in her pink-and-white frilled apron, the other in the net of her hair that was blowing — or she pretended — too much on one side for her comfort.

"Since you have come, stranger," said she, "what do you want up here?" ("Up-here" is a synonym for Castelar, in the phrase of the country.)

THE GOLDEN HAWK

He looked at her steadily, with his yellow hawk-eyes. "I came —" said he, and concluded: "Never mind that now. But, let me tell you, what I want I get."

O the gay laughter that broke from her lips!

"It's a boastful hawk. One might think he had come from Marseilles. But if you won't tell — good-day."

"Not so fast," says he. "This is an inn by the look of it. Oh, I can read a long way when I choose, and your letters here shine down the valley. . . . Where is your father?"

"At the olive-mill, mending the broken floor."

"And your mother?"

She looked a little frightened as she said: "Still at the washing-pool."

"Good, then," said he. "Bring me bread and white wine, and goat's cheese."

"What you want you get," she quoted him gaily, "as long as it's only goat's cheese. You shall have it under the vine by the door. Come. If that is the end of your wishing —"

He laughed: "The end? It's the beginning. We shall see. Now I am hungry. But I always get what I want."

CHAPTER II

THE WAY OF IT

As he followed her along the garden-path, Nerto danced away like a sprite before them; and when they came out into the little paved terrace, still overlooking the valley, where a vine trailed over trellis-work resting upon three stone pillars, and where pansies and fuchsias and geraniums tinged with colour the yellowish grey walls, Jano-Mario, who had clumped after them with her bundle of sewing, passed on and out into the village street.

And when Madaleno called after the girls entreatingly, one of their gay voices rang back: "Your mother is coming up — look over."

However, the innkeeper's daughter was bringing out the loaf and the plate of cheese, and a bottle of the white wine of Paradou; and it was not until she had set these on the stone table before her strange visitor, that she crossed over to the parapet, and picked at the stones, playing with her dimples as she worked out the problem how long remained to her before her mother arrived. Allowing for the weight of the basket of clothes, steepness of road, and shortness of breath, the young huzzy decided that

THE GOLDEN HAWK

she would have time to make pretence of stitchery, and settled demurely by the wall.

But the self-styled hawk was hungry, and none of her pretty dark side-glances reached their aim. He was too busy tearing great crusts of bread, and working over lumps of cheese; he had no more mind then for flirtation than for the original cause that had brought him thither.

There grew a straight black line between the girl's heavy brows, and her underlip pouted itself out, red as a pomegranate. She let her work fall and stared through tears at the toiling figure of her mother, coming inevitably, slowly, and fatefully upwards. It was not each day of the year that such a personable stranger was to be had at Castelar.

She stirred with a cry at a soft flip against her cheek; and then plucked a spray of pale rosemary — had the wretch treasured it to this end? — from the folds of her apron.

She turned and perceived a gleam of eyes and teeth between two enfolding hands — she had no vision for more. But, in simple fact, I must tell you that the loaf had vanished and there was a cavern like a quarry in the cheese — the hawk could eat like the mighty man of Gath — and that the wine-bottle under a reckless elbow-thrust was toppling over the edge of the table and at that very moment smashed on the flags.

"*Hou!*" says he. "So it is. And after?"

"And after," says she, all at once as pert as a little queen-wren on the hedges, "— after, one pays."

THE WAY OF IT

He laughed in his fashion — one short, sharp “Hah!” Then he said: “Good. But I have got what I wanted. And I have no money. What then?”

She stared at him, incredulous. His plumage was so fine!

“You have had a song — and such a song. . . . And you ask for pay? What more do you want?”

She lost her shyness in the offended dignity of the hostess. “You have eaten and you cannot pay?” she demanded, with a shrill note.

“Sant Trefume, you mistake me! I ask, what is it you want? I can pay, though not in francs. One sometimes pays with a kiss —?” The laughter of his face and voice abated as he leaned towards her.

For all her sudden redness she did not retreat; she bent forward to meet him and gave him a painful blow on the nearer cheek. “Or two?” he continued calmly, without moving, though on the one side his face flamed up under the bronze.

She had a moment’s turning towards the foot of the hill: “O mother — mother! Come fast — come fast!”

He drew from his pocket a gay knife, with a handle of pearl-matrix set in brass-work, very fine and costly, no doubt.

Her brown face paled with the shooting fear that he was mad — she shrank towards a corner and put up a useless defence of hands: “What would you do?”

“Payment you must have, if not of one sort, then of another.” He handed her a button from his sleeve. “And since you prefer silver to song and kisses, there you

THE GOLDEN HAWK

have it, and gilt into the bargain — three times the value of your excellent wine. Keep it — keep it. It's for you."

She laid it on the table, faltering: "But if you are so rich — and have no money —?"

"*Dau!* That's the tale. Want to hear it? Come, sit on my knee — What, no? Well, on the table then, or on the flags, or where the devil you please. . . . *Tronde-goi*, it's a shy piece!" He stared at her, with a kind of surprised resentment.

She flattered away from him further in the lee of the table; but alas — the Saints-of-the-Sea protect us! — her mother had stopped with two gossips in the shade of the Cross at the parting of the ways below.

"*Pecaire!*" quoth *Tillon*. "I believe you're afraid of me. And yet no young lamb ever did less damage than myself . . . to be sure I am still at the beginning. . . . But you ask about my money? It is all on my back — la, la! One week now — one week has passed since they buried my father. Good old man — *Sant Micoulau* rest his soul! There was no love lost between us, for he was always trying to crush the serpent under his foot, my child — the serpent that you see before you. . . . It is long enough now since he was able of a fine morning, when the mistral was quiet, to toddle under the ramparts with his journal, or to take his absinthe at his little café between the *Porte de Villeneuve* and the river. Do you see him, my pretty one? It amuses me that you should see him. Like me? No more than yourself. A little lean brown man in a buttoned-up coat — quite respectable, as became the owner of the finest small sausage-shop in the

THE WAY OF IT

city of Avignon. Go there and you will still read his name in gilt letters on the front, TRILLON — that's it — just plain TRILLON, and no more. That was enough. Everybody knows what it stands for. There are no other sausages to be had as good. . . . And I am his son."

He inflated his chest, but whether his pride lay in his parent or in the sausages, she could not for the moment tell. She was to learn that it lay in neither.

"He had two friends," continued Trillon, musingly. "You must know them, as they had to do with me. Old Mercadou, the violin-maker — they call him the 'Scourge of the Prussians,' for the part he played at Sedan — he always spoke in my defence; and Pons, the barber, who trains poodles for the stage, and has always two or three following him about — he was the traitor, no doubt. And yet it was he who told me my mother was a Trinquetaille."

"A Trinquetaille?" repeated Madeloun, wondering.

"None other. A branch of the great line that built your castle up here. A noble breed — but I have no pride of race. . . . She died young, and all I remember of her is, she was tall and had beautiful light hair — like my own, I must suppose — and when I was in the way, she knocked me aside with her foot. . . . Likewise she treated my father, when he made that same mistake. . . . That was the old blood — what would you? And now I have come to see where they built their nest, for it is I that shall build higher yet."

"*Isso!*" she sniffed at him.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"It is true that I have no money," he continued pensively, "yet my father died a man of means — with a long purse, and garden-land outside the gates, and a bank-book. You might not have thought it if you had seen him with Mercadou in his shabby velveteens and Pons in his smock, but my poor father was a man of low tastes; and as for myself, a Trinquetaille can mix with the scum, and come forth the more sparkling." He glanced down lovingly at his own achievements in the way of brightness.

"I cannot think, monsieur," said she, who had never heard of Beatrice of Messina, "why you will talk so long, unless it be for pleasure in your own voice."

"It is for your pleasure, mademoiselle," said he, with a disarming smile, "and for your remembrance after."

She shrugged to disclaim all interest, but he was encouraged to proceed: "My father's money was safe — as safe as a thief in Tarascon Castle. He left it all away from me, my pretty one — and I was his only child."

"To whom then?" Her interest crept out.

"Listen" — he grew more confidential, perhaps with wine so early in the afternoon — "I have an aunt who is the best woman in the world. She undertook the care of my soul when my mother joined the other saints; and she also took charge of the sausage-shop. They tell me — the old men — that she was once good-looking, even for an Arlésienne; I may suppose her to have been something like yourself, mademoiselle. I have heard old Pons rave until his poodles yawned, over the face of her one Easter morning, when she went to church in a lavender silk with pendants in her ears and other fal-lals. I take it Pons

THE WAY OF IT

would have married her, but for her pride in the sausage-shop, if only he had had a suspicion of family to his name. But the simple truth is, his mother died in the *Hôtel Dieu* at Cavaïoun, and there was no knowing who else had been responsible for him until the barber Pons picked him out of the gutter and gave him a name. When we talked of the Trinquetailles, he used to bring up the Baron Pons of Les Baux; but the relationship was not clear, mademoiselle — not clear enough for my aunt. Moreover, Pons is a gross fat man, and blood tells in the figure — *hein?* ”

He interrupted himself, waiting for her approval; and she went off into pretty peals of laughter.

“Well” — he laughed with her for an instant — “it was my aunt who came in for my father’s money, and his gardens and his sausage-shop. There, you have my little tale.”

“But you had vexed him how?” was her rebuke.

“Mademoiselle, I had vexed him and perplexed him all my life; and neither of us could tell why. But all that I said and all that I did, and all that I failed to say or do, was related by Pons to my aunt, and by her to my father; and in the end, the old man was displeased. . . . It was the will of Heaven, no doubt. . . . She scrubbed and scoured, I grant it, and she put aside many sous — women’s business all that. And so, she wanted me to store up the letters of the alphabet and the dates of battles and ways of adding up numbers. But I never thought that a man’s affair, so I learned as little as I could. Sometimes I ran away from school, and sunned myself with the lizards; and I had rare fine games of bowls with

THE GOLDEN HAWK

gypsies under the ramparts — on the far side, believe you, from where my father walked up and down with his journal. I could beat them all, and whenever they had any money, it was I that got it in the end — honestly, you know — honestly; but in the spending of it, they had back all I won. Money? It is an encumbrance. But they respected me, for I could swim both the Durance and the Rhone, not once, but as often as they liked, even in the spring freshets . . . and the Rhone is swift, mademoiselle. And I can climb — good God, how I can climb! Your castle here? I do not suppose there is a place in the world that I cannot climb. I have the foot of a cat. I crawled one day into one of the upper barracks in the castle of the Popes — never mind how. They carried me on their shoulders — the garrison there. To be sure, I might have gone in by the gate, but that's not to the point. I like always the way of the wall and the rope and the ladder. It is my nature."

"And can you not fly then?" she spoke up with some scorn.

"Say the word," he retorted eagerly. "Say the word and you shall see what I can do. I do not suppose there is anything" — he stopped abruptly. "I weary you?" he asked, in a singularly gentle tone.

She shook her head softly as she leaned over the wall. Her mother was coming up now; and there was already a stab of regret in the girl's heart. Oh, the alchemy of the Southern sun! It was but half an hour that they had been together; and in ten minutes or twenty they would forever part — *ai — ai — ai!*

THE WAY OF IT

"More of flying — hereafter," says he. "But I did not tell you, mademoiselle, that my father left me exactly five hundred francs. When the notary read the will — he made a will, mind you, like all respectable folk — when he read, 'He that cannot keep money must go and earn for himself,' I looked at my aunt in her crapes, with her handkerchief over her eyes, and I swore an oath — with which I will not offend your ears, mademoiselle —"

"O, la, la," she breathed, with uplifted eyebrows.

"If I have conquered the Rhone in his fury, little one, what worse remains? What cannot I do?"

"I could say — I could tell a thing or so, braggart!" says she, with a sidelong laugh.

"What then? What then?" He forgets his tale, fiercely snatching at the challenge; but her mother is now panting up the last curve, and she wants the end of the story.

"Your five hundred francs?" she whispers.

"I went out into the Place Pie — you know the Place Pie at Avignon? — and there out of the blindness of the sun and my anger, I found myself standing by the Tour St. Jean just under the old coat-of-arms — if you know what such a thing is. It was Mercadou told me once, when he was boasting of the great deeds that had been done at Avignon. You might have thought he had been there, the blow-gun."

She put her hands to her mouth to check another ripple of laughter, lest her mother hear and end the fun sooner than need be.

"But never mind what it is or why it is there. It's

THE GOLDEN HAWK

a carving of two crossed keys — the keys of the Popes, that unlock the world — and these are in the claws of two hawks, the falcons of Avignon. So I said to myself: 'Here's the one, and when I find my mate —' " According to convention, her eyes fell.

He continued cheerfully: "And afterwards, when the time comes, we can see about unlocking the world. . . . But the five hundred francs — I spent what I could on my back, as you see; and I bought my violin, for up to now I had only an old thing that Mercadou taught me to make years ago. This is one of his best. And I can sing — *hein?* You do not often hear such singing. It was Mercadou who taught me all I know. You shall hear more some day, harvest airs and *noëls*, and the music of all the birds — wait!"

She looked at him, wistful, fascinated, perhaps the more so in that she had heard her mother enter the room behind them, and her ears had been awake to the creak of the heavy basket as it was lifted from the head and set on the table.

"When I had done my best with the money, I scattered what was left among the gypsies and ragamuffins; they had a feast that day outside Avignon. I could not keep it, for I felt that there was a curse upon it, given grudgingly; and I could always get more when I wanted it. Meantime, there are the buttons, which are useful — as to-day. I took the first *diligence* that passed through the town gate; and I sang myself here to see the castle of my fathers. And that's the way of it . . ."

"The way of what, my fine gentleman?" said a harsh

THE WAY OF IT

voice from the door; and the gay Trillon looked over his shoulder at the unfriendly face of the innkeeper's wife.

Doubtless he would have found an adequate reply; but Madeloun's light wits flew up like a cloud of butterflies to obscure the real issue.

"The way to the castle, my mother. The gentleman has had food and wine and paid for it" — she slipped the button into the pocket of her coquettishly frilled apron — "and now he wants to see the castle. Am I to take him there?"

There was calculation in Mère Borel's heavy eyes as she looked her guest over. Rich was his appearance and eccentric; the girl was pretty enough and was widely known to have a gift of attracting francs; the castle stood high, open to the winds of heaven and the eyes of the village. Small was the risk, and great was the chance of gain. . . . "Eh, well, Madeloun," was her grumbling assent.

A moment in the dark room, opened and curtained on all sides against the sun, Trillon fumbled and lost himself; then he found two guiding hands, and kept them fast, for all their pretty fluttering:

"The way of it, eh, Madeloun? So that was the way of it all along? What did I tell you in the beginning? Now we shall see."

CHAPTER III

THE PERILOUS LADDER OF LOVE

THEY walked soberly enough out into the white glare of sunlight and up the overshadowed rocky pathway between tall houses, that is called the Rue des Trois Rois, at Castelar. It was necessary to use discretion, for while nine tenths of the dwellings were ruined in siege nearly three hundred years ago, and have stood empty ever since, their pillared windows gaping to the winds, their wells and courts and carved chimneys harbouring only nettles, from behind the other few, where glass still shines, black eyes were peering and tongues would be babbling presently of feather-headed Madeloun and the eccentric stranger.

The way grew rougher, with stones that twisted the ankle, and briars that pricked the arm, so that it seemed one required help in the climbing. Again, there were landmarks that needed urgent attention, in the world of ultramarine and violet that fell away beneath the feet. And whenever the nice and delicate balance in which the girl moved was threatened by some obstacle in the path, you may be sure that Trillon played his part. With all

THE PERILOUS LADDER OF LOVE

this, there were sighs that melted into laughter, and plaintive scraps of song illuminated by dark teasing glances — it was not for nothing that there was Greek blood in her veins — this little Madelouneto!

But there was scanty speech between the two until they came to the grassy bank that stands on the site of the ancient outworks of the keep. There the girl raised her finger and pointed to the steps, with their dizzy handrail shaking in the wind — the steps cut out of rock that seem to lead up into the sky and then break off on the top of a crumbling wall.

"The lords of the world climbed high," laughed Trillon. "Think you they rode their horses up this pretty stairway?" He laid his hand on the rail, which bent and rattled in his clutch.

All at once Madeloun was close at his elbow: "I am afraid — I cannot go up further. I am always dizzy here. Listen to the wind — there is never a day when it is still, about these steps. I have a fear that some time the mistral will seize me and carry me across the plain and fling me into the sea. Let us go down. I am afraid!"

But his arm barred her way: "Nonsense! You shall climb to the roof of the world with me. Where I go thou shalt go, even if I have to carry thee."

"Don't *thou* me," she says, trying to shrink away.

He disregarded her complaint. "Shall I carry thee up?"

She perceived that he was ready to fulfil his threat and would have retreated; but he was on the one side and sheer precipice on the other.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"Then go on first," said he, "and if thou art dizzy, I can catch thee — so."

With that she flung aside what fear she had or seemed to have, and scrambled up the great blocks of stone, clinging ever to the rail and averting her eyes from the valley below.

But at the top she drew back that he might pass, and pointed the way to a great arch that towered above their heads. "Look — it is all beneath you there — all the world as far as the sea. And you have only to set one foot forward and — look then! I cannot."

He glanced at her shrewdly as if to measure the depth of her fear, cocked his hat against the wind, pursed his lips into a whistle, and with more than wonted spring in his step crossed the patch of turf between them and the arch. But when he was near enough to look through, a change passed over his face that was not merely the shadow of the great wall; and he fell back a pace and stood motionless. And she, who had followed timidly, yet not far behind, heard his murmured words: "My God! The lords of the world built high!"

Then, aware of her approach, he assumed an elaborately careless posture, leaning against the wind-swept, rain-eaten wall, where a single step would have deprived him, in the fraction of a second, of all human semblance.

Perhaps he was thinking of this, for he said: "It would be a feast for my brothers of the mountain." And to the girl: "Did you ever see a *Capoun-Fèr*?"

But he did not turn as he spoke, and his words went away with the wind. He muttered again, but rather to him-

THE PERILOUS LADDER OF LOVE

self than to her: "Eh, well, it is a chimney that I stand in, the shell of a fireplace where my fathers once gathered about the hearth and planned how they should win their battles."

This also failed to reach the girl's attention. "*Ai! ai!*" she said. "Now he is poised, he is balanced against the wind, but if his hat should be lifted, and he should give a sudden jerk . . . and often the stones fall without reason . . . only wings could save him . . ." She stretched out a tremulous hand to his nearer sleeve.

But he was not aware of the slight touch, for his eyes and his mind had settled into equipoise and were absorbed in what lay below. Downward went his gaze, past the chaos of limestone boulders and cliff fantastically carved into gargoyles and corbels of ludicrous and monstrous humanity — down and down, until he drew in his breath. It was not perhaps so far in hundreds of metres, but it was desperately sheer and under-eaten, and at the bottom was a great *débris* of broken rocks. Still down and afield went his glance, past the olive-groves descending the slopes of red earth, past the brief uplift of the foot-hills, bronzed with fir-woods that seemed like low scrub from that height; onward he gazed, past a pale strip of meadow, the red and grey blur of a village, past marshes with shallow lagoons silvery in the blaze of the sun. There, after the bronze and green and red and gold — there began the blue: folded veils of azure and violet and ultramarine, passing away, line upon line, here and there empurpled with heat or with shadow, with — who could say what? — until the sky fell and the sea rose up to the meeting,

THE GOLDEN HAWK

and the land embraced both or was absorbed, and nothing remained but blue — the measureless blue of unending space — the blue where all things meet and are one.

So deep, so breathless was the muse of Trillon that Madeloun's fear grew into panic. She dared not leave him — dared not rouse him — dared not speak or move to stir him from that dizzy poise. But it may be that he felt the terror in her gaze, for he turned slowly and looked up at her; and immediately she held out two brown hands to guide him on the one step back to safety.

When they stood together, he would not release what she had so freely offered; but made pretence of holding her still unconsciously, while he turned again to the plain, and said as one who mused: "I can see the towers of Avignon — a golden blotch against the white ribbon of the Rhone —"

She laughed and ceased her struggle for freedom: "But, monsieur —"

He turned his yellow eyes upon her and then — terrible man! — he read her little thought as plainly as if it had been spoken. He continued with a twinkle that she could not face: "And against the wall, in the shadow of the gate, I see the *charcuterie*, with my old aunt by the window stringing up sausages all day long, *pecaire!* while I am here on the top of the world, ready to pick and choose among its good things. I can see —"

She suddenly wrenched herself loose, and stepped further back into safety.

"You can see Avignon and the Rhone," said she saucily,

THE PERILOUS LADDER OF LOVE

"if you come quite to the other side of the hill and look to the north."

But she was a stupid Madeloun, thinking to bring down the hawk with such a poisoned arrow; he fluttered as high as ever: "I can see what I please when I will, and that without eyes, as I saw Avignon, a moment since; but now all I see is what is nearest at hand."

"Oh! oh! and no!" She fled to the shelter of a great escarpment that would hide them both from the eyes of the village. It is said that Saracens built it once as a vantage-point for hurling Greek fire into the château; but it served admirably for love-making.

She flashed defiance upon him from her shadow; and at first he stood apart and laughed at her pretty challenge. But he held his hat in his hand; and while the great wind beat upon him, and tossed his hair in his eyes, and made the blood sing in his veins, the sun was at another work, the Mage of Provence, Alchemist of Alchemists . . . I am afraid that all in a moment Trillon's head was turned altogether.

He laughed, but she would not laugh with him — instead, leaned against the wall, picking at her apron, very angry.

"*Sarnipabiéune!*" — he swore as he ate, mightily. "I am a fool! If the hawk mates with the wren, what becomes of the little hedge-picker — *hein?*"

"Go away — go away!" She struck out at him in a helpless rage. "I will have nothing to do with you."

He came close and pinned her shoulders to the rock: "Dost thou speak like that to a Trinquetaille, thou hedge-

THE GOLDEN HAWK

bird, thou sparrowlet? Oh, I will *thou* thee as much as I please for a reason that I have! But look and consider: here I come with my head stuffed full of tales of my fathers, for I have read books, though I loved not learning, and I have heard many things from Mercadou and others — old Pons himself. . . . So here I come to see the place from which the falcons flew down upon their prey. I passed the little stream and the ford where they fought the Battle of the Thirteens with the lord of Orange, and won Barbegal, and I saw the Pass of Orgue where they fell upon the Marseilles merchants and lightened their beasts of much Indian wealth — *chut!* I came up here to take my first steps in the winning of the world . . . and if all I catch is a pretty hedge-sparrow . . .”

“And you have not got that!” she defied him, although his hands still pinned her to the rock. But she made no move to resist. Indeed, hampered as she was, she found means to lift her apron to her mouth and to bite at its hem. How far she was frightened and how far foolish in her bravado I cannot say.

Trillon, although he looked at her, seemed rather to stare through her and into the rock; and for the moment he forgot to laugh: “Every man has his thoughts, I suppose; and the thing in my mind is now, whether to let you go, and climb on my way to the adventures that my lucky-star shall point out to me, or whether —”

At this, she dropped her apron and met his glance.

Still he hesitated: “I have a lucky-star, as you will know some day. It may bring me land — wealth — honours” — but here bright eyes and wavering dimples

THE PERILOUS LADDER OF LOVE

won the day. "It shall bring me first the innkeeper's daughter!"

As swiftly as ever pounced peregrine, he caught her in his arms; and in three strides he went boldly across the open, where they might be seen by any chance eyes turned upwards from the village; and he paused at the head of the rough-hewn steps.

"What say you — *hein?*"

But she lay still in a terror that was half ecstasy.

The wind leapt upon them with a shout, lifted Trillon's hat and sent it whirling and bounding down the cliff.

But he laughed as he stood in the full glare of the sunlight; and his yellow hair blew across her cheek as he bent and kissed her, and stifled her faint cry suddenly against his shoulder.

Then, with the wind swaying him, weighted as he was, he stepped down, not too carefully, to the next great block, and kissed her again. "It was a long journey up," said he.

On the third, she was ready for him and turned her face away — but not quickly enough. Yet, though she shrank, she clung fast, with the sickening fear that he was mad and would suddenly throw her to the winds — that she might fall and roll and crash downwards. . . .

She held her breath with the horrible sinking that comes of such imagination; yet on the fifth step she wondered whether, instead, he would leap and still hold her fast; and she cared less.

On the sixth, her mood changed; and she laughed up at him to see how his tufts of yellow hair were ruffled into the semblance of feathers.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

And on the seventh, he it was who laughed because she had lost all fear.

On the eighth, "How long will you remember?" he asked.

On the ninth, he paused until she whispered, "Not long." Then he: "I make sure."

The tenth step was a landing — a resting-place in the difficult up and down. Here he balanced himself as well as he could, though never without giving a little to the force of the wind; and standing near the edge, threatened to hurl her away. But she would not trouble now to look at the peril below — gazed only at him and said: "Throw me — throw me — if you can!"

It seemed that they must have heard his laughter in the village below. "Is the sparrowlet a hawk after all? And shall we fly to the sun together?"

But she: "We're going" — it was the eleventh step — "down."

And he chanted, as he marked the twelfth stage: "The perilous ladder of love!"

The sun was in his eyes as he counted thirteen and fourteen; and the wind beat a desperate tattoo — fifteen, sixteen and seventeen—so that he was all but over-balanced. . . . O the ecstasy of eighteen and nineteen! But at twenty she stirred and heightened the peril.

As suddenly he gave himself to the wind, and the steps flew upwards past them, marked but not counted. It was a long, long flight, but he reached the grass, set her on her feet, and steadied her from falling.

"After?" says he.

THE PERILOUS LADDER OF LOVE

And *after* was a shower of tears, which he was too wise to interrupt until they had spent their force. But when the frilled apron was wet and still, he pulled it away. "Come," says he. "We are betrothed. Make the best of it. It's time I met your father."

She let him draw her timid hand through his arm; and so with the keen wind blowing her black hair from under her cap against his that she had laughed to find like hawk's feathers, with the sun blinding their eyes and streaming like white-hot metal against their unprotected faces, they came together down the broken slopes and the jagged pathway.

It is the sun, believe me if you will, that rules the children of the South; and they knew themselves in his power.

Once Trillon looked back: "It was a long climb and I meant to go far. But the coming down was better. With a ladder like that — even with Death below — *hoi*, it's good to live in the day!"

CHAPTER IV

THE SILVER RING

AUZIAS BOREL had finished mending the floor of the olive-mill and come in for his four o'clock lunch. As he sat down with his wife in the cool, dark living-room, she told him what had happened while he was away.

"But it's a long time now," says he rather anxiously, biting the ends of his white moustache. "I'll go up and see —"

"You'll do nothing of the sort," snapped the woman. "You'll give your mind to your bread and cheese. It may be a matter of three or four francs to us."

He sighed and crossed the room to look through the screen-door, up the hill. There was an ease and grace of movement in his short slim figure that showed his Greek ancestry, as did the well-chiselled nose and quick-glancing eyes. In striking contrast was all this to the woman whose sombre, passionate face, rough-featured and coarse of texture, was her heritage from some tribe of Ligurian savages. She was altogether uncomely, except in the unfathomable splendour of her dark eyes — eyes in which one seemed to look backward into the

THE SILVER RING

mysteries of the beginning of life — eyes full of the trouble and passion and sorrow of strange races, Celt and Iberian and older nameless folk whose history stretched back into the kingdom of the beasts. And these eyes were her sole outward and visible gift to her daughter. God help the girl if, in addition to the light and fantastic ways of her Phocian father, she was burdened as well with the passionate soul of the elder Madeloun, her mother!

Auzias still lingered at the door, shifting his feet boyishly in a sort of dance. "If" — said he, "if I thought —"

"If you thought," she said, and rattled the dishes she was setting on the bare table. "If you thought, you would be rich, Borel."

"If I were rich," he grumbled, though he laughed a little too, "I would sell you and buy a wife without a tongue. But I'm thinking of Leleto —"

"*Vrai?*" she sneered. "It's nothing else all day long. One would suppose you had never a daughter before. Why don't you talk of Nanoun with her lubberly market-gardener at Beaucaire, and Rouseto up the hill here with her five children and a husband who basks like a lizard, and eats the olives that you provide. And you with a son to follow you! But it was always daughters — daughters — to your mind, and with this last one worst of all . . ."

She stopped breathless, her hand at her side.

"Be quiet," said Auzias quite needlessly, and brandished his knife — they were at the table now — in a way that looked alarming, but was only a flourish preparatory to cutting the cheese. "Be quiet, will you? Women

THE GOLDEN HAWK

are always talking — there's no peace for a man in the world. If my mind runs on Madelounet, it is only that I am thinking how she may be provided for when we are called away."

She shrugged: "We have talked of this before."

"We cannot talk of it too much," said he, taking a handful of ripe black olives. "And besides, we must know the mind of the girl."

"Her mind?" said the mother, with her mouth full of bread. "What should a girl of seventeen think on such matters?"

"That," said Borel calmly, "is what I propose to find out." Then his thoughts turned and he asked: "What has Jôusè been doing to-day? I have not seen him."

But she was slower to change the subject: "Girls — girls! At her age they're all as much alike as a flock of lambs."

"But the shepherd knows each one, if he has a hundred," said he. "Now, I myself, when I was young . . ."

She gave him no chance: "Set a wolf among them, and you'd find little difference in their jumping."

"Well, to my mind," said the father, playing with the heap of his olive-stones, "girls spoil with long keeping. I'd like to see her with a husband of her own, and of grandchildren there cannot be too many —"

"Not when you put the bread into their mouths?" she asked pertinently, but he waved the point aside.

"Look, now, Borel, be reasonable," she deigned to argue with him. "We've talked this over before. We make a living out of the inn, with the olives and the silk-

THE SILVER RING

worms; but when we die there's Jouse and his wife, with their four; and the little that's over and above will be needed for Nanoun's rent and to keep Rouseto and her brood out of the almshouse. Your daughters have the gift of marrying badly, Borel; and nobody could say that Jouse chose much better. Now, what's for Madeloun?"

"They could spare her a little, and share what there is," he persisted stubbornly.

She grew shrill with expostulation: "And where is she to find a husband that will take her penniless? In the ditch? What do you want? Besides, Father Gougoulin —"

Borel spread out his palms to show his perfect comprehension. In the end as in the beginning, he had told himself, it was the priest who wanted to make the girl into a nun. He uttered his protest as best he could, as he had frequently uttered it before: "The holy life is all very well in its way; but, to my thinking, it comes unnatural in our family. You can't turn a live hare into a tombstone."

His wife had been brushing the crumbs from the table into her apron. She now flung a great lump of bread to each of the waiting dogs, and went to scatter her gatherings among the chickens.

At the door she met Madeloun and the stranger, still blinking from the sunlight.

Borel was stuffing his pipe in the far corner of the room; and Madeloun went at once to sit on the bench beside him, with the instinct, no doubt, to seek shelter and protection.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

Trillon waited until the older woman came back, wiping her mouth with her toil-hardened hand. She looked for him to lay silver francs upon the table; but instead he faced her, his feet well apart, his hands at his sides, his chin high — I will not say that the attitude was not perhaps intentionally exaggerated.

"Madame," said he, "and monsieur, I do myself the honour to ask for your daughter's hand."

"Oh!" cried Madeloun, as if she had not expected this, and buried her face against her father's arm.

Mère Borel looked at the stranger, slow to comprehend, until her husband's chuckle stirred her to anger. Auzias had laid down his pipe, and shook and twinkled with amusement. He was the first to speak. "Eh, well? What of it?" he asked.

Trillon laughed back at him: "You take it wisely — and from a man without a hat too."

"One must take things as they come," said Auzias philosophically, as he lighted his pipe. Then feeling the girl's tears through his shirt-sleeves, he turned to her: "Eh, well, what would you have? They all weep, I suppose. You have been quick in finding a man, Leleto."

She murmured something that he could not hear; and he bent his head to listen.

But now Mère Borel had understood, and she came forward to Trillon with her question: "Will monsieur kindly explain himself?"

He was aware of some disappointment. It seemed then as if, contrary to all possibilities, the thing would be so easy. It even occurred to him that for one who believed

THE SILVER RING

himself destined to fly, free of earth, in the sunny upper air, it might be no small encumbrance to be thus ensnared — he kept the figure of the bird — at the outset. But again — and yet again — it was the main point; for the present moment it was the girl he had wanted. . . . Had? Oh, the swift passing of tenses! He put all thought aside and set himself resolutely to the winning.

"Madame, I refer you to a certain sausage-shop, of which I will give you the address, kept by a respectable woman of Avignon, my aunt. So much for the Trillons — the fact that my mother was a Trinquetaille is perhaps less important to you. But it supports me in times of calamity — or would support me, for as yet I have had no misfortune . . ."

She cut him short: "And what *rente* does monsieur derive from the sausage-shop?"

He turned a surprised face upon her: "*Rente*? None in the world. I told you it was my aunt's. But since you demand a character, I can but refer you to my only relation. And heaven knows," he concluded to himself, "what facts she will manage to scrape together."

"You have no *rente*?" she repeated, goaded out of her formal dignity.

"Nothing in the world," said he; and again Auzias laughed, and patted his daughter's head. But when his wife looked that way, he obscured himself in a cloud of smoke.

"Eh, well?" said the woman furiously. "And then — and then how do you live?"

"As best I can," was the calm reply. "There is food in the world and I can get it."

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"It is clear," observed Auzias, coming out of his cloud, "that monsieur is a young man of small experience."

Trillon took this gravely: "The saying goes, monsieur, that marriage is the shortest road to more."

But he moved about now, with a certain restless impatience. It was one thing to kiss a pretty girl in the sun; and quite another, to argue with her parents, dry-mouthed too, over means of living. He began to wonder whether the easiest way for all of them, out of the situation, were not to leap over the wall, alight on his feet as he was bound to do, and so return as he had come. There were many pretty girls in a day's journey . . .

But at this critical moment, Madaleno lifted her face, not too tear-stained for charm, and tear-stained enough to be piteous; and the memory rushed over him that this was the one girl whom, for some reason inexplicable to himself, he was bent upon having. He realized then that he had come near swerving from his purpose; and he mentally shook his head over the weakness. If only as a test, he must see the thing through.

"Well, madame," said he, coolly, "if you and monsieur consent to take me as son-in-law, you will one day be very proud; if not, we must manage without you."

"Is it in France that we hear such talk?" cried she, suddenly purple. "Or are we all mad? You — Madeloun and your beggar . . . Borel, throw him over the wall."

But Auzias turned to the girl: "Eh, Leloun, what say you?"

She looked at the invader, then she looked away, and she was obviously ashamed to speak.

THE SILVER RING

Borel glanced from the one to the other, and chuckled again, saying to his wife: "It's a clear case, woman. We shall have to let them alone. We have all been young in our day and thought we could live on sunshine and almond-shells. Two fools — more or less. Let them go their way. It's better than four bare walls and the eternal ding-dong of a chapel bell."

Trillon did not hear this, for he was balancing himself on the table on the other side of Madeloun. He swung the strap of his violin-case about, to ease his shoulder a little; and all the while he looked at her with a glance that she would not return, and said nothing.

Mère Borel advanced upon him. "Clear the house — scum — rubbish!" said she, with emphasis.

He looked at her calmly: "*Tron-de-sort*, I shall do nothing of the kind until I have finished my affair here."

And while she stared at him, dumb at his effrontery and helpless with rage, he pulled at his watch-chain until he had snapped away something that hung there.

"Look up, Madeloun," said he, with no attempt at a whisper. "Here's a ring for thee. It's only of silver; I won it last year, playing ombre with a gypsy girl under the walls of Avignon. But she had worn it long, and she told me that it had been blest at the shrine of St. Sarah, in the church of the Holy-Maries-by-the-Sea. Look, it has an image of the Virgin cut into it. That should keep thee safe," — his tone took on a tinge of mockery — "while I am out in the world making a fortune for the two of us. Hold out thy hand."

But she shrank away behind her father's shoulder:

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"Go away! I don't want you! I never want to see you again!"

"This is a wooing in truth," said Auzias, though his eyes twinkled in spite of himself.

Trillon had a word to that: "Not at all. The wooing was up on the rocks; this is the repenting. But it's too late for repentance." He seized her hand and pulled it part way across the table.

She gave a faint scream, struggling to free it.

"Come — come," said Auzias, and half rose to interfere.

But Trillon had been the quicker. Before the old man could reach forward, before the woman could cry out for help and summon the village, the silver Virgin was thrust upon the girl's finger, so hard that the skin was scratched red, and she cried out with pain as she pulled at it in a succession of vain efforts to get it off.

Mère Borel rushed to the door, but her husband was there with her: "Hush, woman, we must keep this quiet. We shall never hear the end of it — wait — wait . . ." He seized her arm, for she was determined, and he had much ado to keep her where she was.

When he could look again, Trillon was gone, and Made-loun, the little ring still on her finger, had her face on the table, sobbing.

Auzias went over to her: "What did he say to you?"

She was nearly hysterical: "He said — he said — that the ring would keep me fast, and he would come back. . . . O sweet Saints, help me! I think he was the devil himself; and I cannot get it off . . ."

She checked her sobs all at once and held her breath.

THE SILVER RING

From the rocks below there floated up first a clear strong whistle, and then a rude sort of chant, unaccompanied, perhaps improvised on the moment:

"The sun stood high,
The wind blew dry,
In the azure sky.
O falcon fly —
Diu! Dan! Boum!"

The three listened without moving until the sound had died away.

CHAPTER V

THE HEART OF MADELOUN

AT Castelar, the burnished chariot of the sun cleaves its way through the blue air to the whistle and crack of the whips of the wind. Rarely through the long summer blaze comes the rumble that tells how the smiths of heaven are trying to mend the weather. Now and again there is a great stillness; and when the wind is gone, folk have terror of the rain of white rays that kill.

Few sounds, save the mistral, come so high. The cigalas sing in the plains, the nightingales in the wooded valleys, the wild bees are busy in the lower rocks. The sheep-bells climb and climb, but drift away among the shaggy slopes where no men dwell; and the mule-carts tinkle down the white road, bearing the stone from the quarries, but they pass seldom, and under the walls. In Castelar itself, you hear but the chatter of women about the washing-pool, or the rare clear song of a girl floating out from the ramparts in *La Peirounei* or what you will.

And no less quiet than the voice of the town is the inner life of its people, to whom come the echoes of great deeds in the world below, as far away and as rarely as thunder.

THE HEART OF MADELOUN

When two meet in the Place, it is the silk-worms that are spoken of, or the olives, or the dearth of water. When a child is born and christened, there is a little ripple of talk and excitement, and family histories are remembered. When someone dies of old age, the small ancient bell of King René's day and the great bell that Mazarin himself bequeathed are tolled in alternation and all men leave their work, shepherds and quarrymen together, and make procession to fetch the dead on his last journey; and the greater part bear their candles at the Mass, but a few of the impious men and boys linger outside under the plane-trees. Then the still life goes on, with now and then a burst of laughter, bonfires for St. John's Eve, bloody noses at election-time and a knife-thrust or two, the dancing of the *jarandoulo* when the harvest comes in, the Adoration of the Shepherds in the church at Christmas time and the Noël bush, the beautiful Masses of Easter . . . There is never much doing at Castelar, and little thinking; but much thinking in quiet corners, and song in the sunshine.

Where one day is so much like another, the months glide into years unperceived; and so it was that Madaleno lived by the bread of the moment all through the hot season and for a while knew no change.

And yet I speak but by the letter: her spirit was no more idle than were the silk-worms that she tended while they made ready to spin them cocoons; and like them, she herself came to spin a chrysalis of the silk of dreams, in which she might hide and brood.

At first, there was the matter of the silver ring. She was superstitious, finding a touch of miracle in the fact

THE GOLDEN HAWK

that it had somehow slipped on, and yet for no manner of coaxing or eager plucking would afterwards leave her finger. With her efforts she had cut into the raw flesh; and then had had to wait, with sullen impatience, for the wound to heal. She grew accustomed to hiding the hand in her apron pocket, when any of the villagers came her way.

It was not many days thereafter that under the goad of shame and the prick of her mother's tongue, she took her shawl over her head and set off valley-wards that the smith might file away this token of the adventurer.

Over against the ancient guard-house by the gate, where now the grapes are pressed into wine, she met a neighbour. And so strong was the wind up the narrow pass, that in holding her shawl together the girl forgot her ring; and the woman, purblind as she was, saw the flash of the silver. She passed for half-witted, the old body, but give me leave to doubt that.

"*Bon-dieu*," says she. "What's this?" And she seized the hand, peering close with red-rimmed eyes.

Hot-cheeked and ready for tears, Madeloun strove to withdraw; but the knotted fingers were strong as those of a witch.

"This is news," says the dotard, whose name was Zouè. "And is it the gift of the young shepherd across the valley — mm-mm — his name is gone now; or is it from Pèire, the quarryman, who sits through the Mass nowadays — he who never went near a church all his life, and mistakes you for the image of the Blessed Mary all the while . . . hi! hi! hi!" She cackled away in laughter until the

THE HEART OF MADELOUN

girl longed to strike her withered face. She stopped herself with a sudden: "Ramoun — that is the shepherd's name; and a pretty boy indeed — for a pretty girl. Which of them gave it thee, Leloun, Leleto? Tell an old woman, who is long past the joy of her life . . ."

"Let me go," cried Madaleno. "It's a work of sorcery, and if Jòrgi cannot get it off, I shall chop away the finger myself. She forgot her secret in utter misery: 'I shall die if I keep it on much longer!'"

(You believed it, Madeloun, I know; but where is the truth in a young woman's heart? It is buried so deep and groweth so slowly that she is turned old before it blossoms into words and bears fruit in actions.)

Old Zouè shook her head in solemn understanding of the case: "Cut not off the finger — cut not off the ring. The Virgin will be angered if her image is so dishonoured. Moreover, it has been blessed by a priest with holy water, as anyone would know. And would you take a sacred thing like that from your life? No — no — you must abide the chance of it now. Go into the church and pray; and if the treasure be not holy, it will vanish of itself. I could tell you a tale . . ."

Madeloun looked at her strangely, taking her words as if they were guidance direct from Heaven; and without a word she turned aside from her course, under the archway that leads to the Street of the Laurel, and so up the hill to the church. She was aware of a curious blending of emotions, hope of something that she would not admit into her mind, fear of something that she would not name, a desire that clung to her in despite of her will.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

But Zouè's thirst was not quenched: "Leloun, Leleto — you have not told me who it was?"

At this, the girl gave a sudden laugh, shook off the restraining hand, and fled lightly up the rock-cut path.

But she was pensive again when she came into the cool green dampness of the church, crossed herself and said her first little prayer or two by long habit, without thinking. Then she continued kneeling, with her arms across the chair in front, and her cheek against the silver ring; and when she remembered what she had come for, and that she was waiting for a sign from above, her heart beat fast for a time.

Close — close against her face she held the bewitched thing — that she might know the sooner, she told herself, when it took wings to fly away. I think there was a while that she really expected it to slip between her fingers, flash like a marsh-light against one of the black chapels, then disappear forever.

"O Holy Mother!" she began; then could find no more words to her prayer, for the desires of her heart were warring.

"O blessed Santo Mario, Saloumè, if it be wrong" — but this prayer fared no better than the other.

At first the ring had been cold against her cheek, but now it was become so warm that she had to move it gently, to be sure that it was still there. She took it away then, and looked at it, and with her heart pounding and fluttering unevenly, resolved to put the test again, here before the altar of God.

THE HEART OF MADELOUN

"If you be evil," said she, "or given by one that is evil — fall off, ring!"

She shook her hand, gently at first, then hard; she pulled — she clutched it and tugged. It seemed to nestle more firmly than before in the pink flesh.

"It is my fate," said she, paling a little at the memory of the neighbour's words, and she tried to fix her thoughts with her eyes upon the little red lamp burning before the altar. But steadfast as the flame itself was the dwelling of her mind upon that one day marked and set apart from all the other days of her life. Like a whirlwind, he had come up out of the plains below and had borne her with him to the topmost peak of the mountain; but the coming down — the memory of the coming down was so vivid that for a time she lost all sense of the church, and lived over again the experience that had ended with the silver ring.

She tried to think out her own feeling in the matter; but her brain was not used to such work.

When the shepherd Ramoun and Pèire, the quarryman, had cast black looks at each other across her shoulders, and each had muttered oaths and threats whenever she smiled upon the other, she had been very sure that in her heart was only delight triumphant.

But in this case there was no joy, only a strong though vague sense of trouble. She felt ensnared as Magali had been, and she could not tell whether she was more sorry because she had been trapped or because the trapper had gone away. And in this thought she came nearer the truth than she had been before.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

But if Magali had died among the White Nuns, through sheer weariness of pursuit, it seemed to Madeloun that she must die rather because *he* had pursued and half won and gone away . . . She had reached then the stage of the pronoun that needs no explanation, although she did not realize what it stood for.

If she should die first . . . before he came back? She had a moment's pleasure picturing him at her grave; but not even in her imagination would he show grief enough for her liking. From a sentimental point of view she had to give him up; he was not like the heroes of the few story-books that had come her way. . . .

But after all death was far off. She put out her hand and touched a tombstone, a green slab that stood against a pillar by her side. It showed an ancient man in a queer dress, kneeling with clasped hands — she could have drawn it as well herself, was her contemptuous judgment. The words round about the figure were in a strange tongue — Latin, she supposed, which only priests can read. She remembered hearing Father Gougoulin say that the gentleman's name was Jourdain; but who he was or when he lived nobody knew.

This was how Madeloun thought of death. Sant Saviourin, it was solemn enough, and queer and stiff, and a thing to be afraid of when 't came, only it was so very far away — it had never crossed the threshold of her home. Somehow she felt sure it was not death should stand between her and Trillon — if ever he came back — as he never would — *ai! ai!* But what did she care? For that was the easiest way out of the matter — if only she

THE HEART OF MADELOUN

could be rid of the silver ring, without vexing the Blessed Virgin . . .

It was not death that should part them — no; but the image of that man Jourdain set her a-thinking what it might be.

She was tracing idly with her plump, dimpled, brown finger the outline of his lean, fasting, praying, mortified hands, when the clue she had been seeking to her trouble of heart flashed before her in a little trail of memory.

She had been sitting long ago, at the doorway, sewing a canvas screen to keep out the sun. All at once her mother, who was working with her, had sighed heavily: "It would be a happy day for me if I could once see you safe in the arms of the good God!"

And she had uttered a frightened, "What do you mean, mother?"

But for answer she had had strange words: "The sun is hot up here, and it turns our heads and makes us mad, so that we must repent to the end of our lives; but within the convent there is always shelter and peace."

She remembered every phrase she had found to say: "But I am not mad, my mother. And I love the hot sun. And in a convent it would be all dark and cold — I should die of it!"

Her mother had turned upon her unfathomable eyes: "We shall see in a few years" — she was then just past her first communion. "You are your mother's daughter — Saints help us all! — but you would be safe there."

"Safe from what?" she had wondered.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

Her mother had only shrugged.

"Safe from what?" she had insisted.

Then she had had a blow on the cheek that set it flaming and stinging, another that almost flung her from her chair, a third that left her on the floor; and between them an ugly word that she had never before heard, repeated often and with violence — a word that hurt like the blows, though she knew not its meaning, save by instinct. Half a dozen years had passed since then, and although she had been too proud or ashamed to ask, she had learned in some silent inexplicable way what evil thing her own mother had called her, and in her innocence, the undeserved and insulting reproof had formed a definite barrier between the two, not perceived perhaps by the older woman, but never forgotten by the younger. Remembering the scene now, she knew that she should have to contend — if Trillon came back — with her mother's determination that she should go into a convent; but the reason for this bitter resolve that condemned her to a wearisome life of prayer and dull duties remained to her obscure.

As she knew very well, from that day of brutality which she shuddered to remember, the idea had never been dropped. It came up again when her older sisters were busy embroidering smocks and sheets against the day when they should find suitors, while she was never given linen enough to make a pillow-case. She might help with the bleaching and sewing of the others, but when she alluded timidly to her own, upon one occasion, she was drenched in a flood of language that sent her head-

THE HEART OF MADELOUN

long down the hill into the grassy meadows, weeping with a passion that cared not who saw.

It chanced that her father was the first person she met. He was pruning his olive-trees near the field-path along which her hot heart drove her.

He had called her once or twice, but she would not hear or heed; then with his incredible lightness of foot he had dashed upon her and held her by the arm.

Questioned, she had only flung her apron over her head, and sobbed out, wordless, the bitterness of her heart.

He had waited a moment, then grown restless, had tried a joke—without any effect. At last, he shook her sharply back into her senses. "Sit down and tell me all about it," he had commanded, and stretched himself lazily on a grassy bank. She could see him now, with his hat over his eyes and a triple spray of the white star-flower called *savoyard* moving between his lips when he found occasion to answer. Even then his long sharply-pointed moustache was nearly white, although he had the spring and the look of a young man.

She could not speak, although he showed unusual patience. At last he began: "Madelounet, only fools run hatless in the sunshine on a day like this."

She could hear still the torrent of her answer: "If I die it is no matter; I will not go into a convent!"

He had paused before he spoke, and she had hung breathless for his words. But he laughed, and she could not see his eyes, and she knew that he was evading her. "Wait till they come and fetch you," said he lightly.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"Would you let them, *pai*?" she had asked, and remembered still the cold fear in her heart.

Then he had raised himself on one elbow to look at her: "Well, what's wrong with nuns? We must have nuns, you know."

"It is true, then," she had said desperately. "My mother wills it. And she will not give me a dowry."

He had pretended to roar with laughter, but, child as she was, she had felt the hollowness of his mirth. "Dowry? What is the minx thinking of? Where's your doll? *Caspitello*! You have — how many years?"

She had flung herself on the grass beside him, weeping out the tears that she could not control.

He had sat up altogether then and put his back against the nearest olive-trunk—a man might as well be comfortable, was his creed. "Well, now," he had said, "let us reason a little. Look, if we may say that troubles are like rain, I am as light as the wind to blow them away; but you and your mother—ay, you're like the earth; you drink them in and gather them until they swell all together and make a fountain of tears." He had stopped to laugh at his own image, then concluded: "But in the end it all comes to this: if it's the will of God that you should be a nun, you might as well try to fight the weather. If not, well, in any case, Madelounet, your old father will stand by you as long as he can. So dry your tears."

She had tried to obey him, had got to her feet when he reached again for his pruning-hook; but her words had been steadfast: "I tell you, my father, I will not."

He had wrinkled up his eyes, in sympathetic compre-

THE HEART OF MADELOUN

hension; but his words were: "If it be the will of God —" He had concluded by lifting his shoulders and his eyebrows and thrusting out his underlip and the palms of his hands. His meaning was as clear as the sunlight.

Another moment he had paused to watch the chittering swallows, before he turned him to his pruning: "There be things in nature and things against nature . . ."

But when she wanted the why of the pestilential trouble, he shook his head again; the reason was beyond him. "Why are you what you are? But I will speak to your mother."

With that he bent to his work and she had to content herself. She remembered how she had walked home under a hawthorn hedge at the foot of the hill, how the sweet white petals had showered upon her, how a nightingale had followed her until she began to climb the stony path, fluttering from bush to bush and singing out his freedom and his joy — yes, she remembered the very look of the sunset — bunches of lilac in a golden plain. . . . And the quarrymen were going home to their supper, and their wives stood in the doorways with an eye to the fire and one to the littlest child that tried to run with the others to meet their father . . . the sweetness of it all! Girl as she was, she had felt it keenly; and over against it stalked the fear that she might have to go behind high grey walls and pray — pray — pray . . .

Ai! ai! Long kneeling on cold stones brings stiffness even to supple young joints. Madeloun rose painfully, shook herself a little, and brushed her hand across her eyes to be rid of the hateful dream.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

To be sure, her father must have said something, for that was six years ago; and though never a word had been said of her dowry from that day to this, and both her sisters had married and were living their lives, no more had the convent walls closed upon her. There had been talk — oh, yes — talk enough and threats and lamentations, when her mother was in the mood; but there the matter had rested — thanks to Auzias or some other intervening power. . . . But now there was the silver ring, and what difference that would make in her future she could not possibly foresee. One thing was sure: it had not stirred from her finger, and so could not be evil. From now on she must wear it and trust in the Virgin, of whom it was the emblem.

She walked home, with a sudden change of mood almost merry; and tossing up her hand said airily: "Eh, my mother, it cannot be. As well cut the finger off!"

Mère Borel made a step forward; and her daughter hastily retreated and swung aside the door-curtain, ready for flight. The ring shone like a diamond in the sun.

"What would you? What would you?" Madeloun laughed still, though nervously. "You would not dare lay hands on the image of the Holy Mother . . ."

"Huzzy!" came the trumpet-sound of the deep, hoarse voice; and in fear of worse Madeloun fled to the hills.

But her heart sang within her, for she knew that she had made a stand against the terror that threatened her life; and although she was trusting her future to the unknown, warm upon her head as the sunshine itself she felt the blessing of the Holy Mother.

CHAPTER VI

THE BEGINNING OF THE SIEGE

AH, but the summer days are long and hot and still in the little Alps! There is a loneliness in the very wind when it flaps its great wings, and with its shrillness outcries all the petty human sounds of earth. And when one waits and waits for that which never comes, the spirit grows dull and barren as the rocks themselves.

Then perhaps it was well that young Madeloun was not left to the agony of watching uninterrupted, waiting for the return of him who had come and gone in a day and had left no trace of his presence except a little silver ring — that, and whatever trouble she bore, wordless, in her own heart.

But she was not left to her dreams altogether. The same day that she fled to the church to exorcise, if might be, the fetter from her hand and spirit — that same day she spent hours wandering knee-deep in lavender and cytisus where the wild bees were busy. There she was soothed into the dream that she would yet find her happiness again, and forget this time when her gay laughter was often a mere breaking away from the trouble that

THE GOLDEN HAWK

pressed, and ended in sudden tears. When she returned home in the evening, the first shadow that crossed her path, some little distance from the village, came from the black frock of Father Gougoulir.

"My child," said he, "your mother came to see me to-day. She is troubled about you."

"She has no need to be," says the girl, reddening and pulling at her apron.

"What are these tales I hear about you?"

She looked up into the dark full countenance, its heavy eyebrows drawn together and bent upon her. It was the face of an old man who has outlived the best of his youth and kept its weakness; and if Madeloun could have put her sensation into words, she would have told of a thrill of fear or of repulsion whenever they two encountered.

His question did not admit of a ready answer. She shifted her footing and perhaps looked sulky. He put out one stubby finger, shaking a little, and turned up her chin, noting the angry flush that marred her delicate beauty into a momentary likeness to her mother's face.

The change startled him so that he released her without a word; and paused so long before speaking that she began to wonder if she might get away. When he spoke, it was with calculation and eminent sweet reasonableness. He read her a little homily on the duties of children to parents . . .

The moment he paused she was upon him with: "But my father does not want me to be a nun."

"Gently — gently," said he. "Who is talking of such a thing?"

THE BEGINNING OF THE SIEGE

"My mother has been talking of it all my life," said she, and added with courage, "as you know."

At this, he said something to himself, in Latin she supposed, as she could not understand it. But when he spoke to her, his words seemed kind, almost compliant. "Put the matter altogether out of your thoughts for the time; and tell me about this young man, who came up here the other day, with the express purpose of working mischief, it seems."

She was amazed at her own anger in hearing Trillon thus decried. She said curtly: "I can tell you nothing."

"But his ring — *hein*?"

"I cannot get it off," she declared, with a flash of laughter.

"I could get it off for you" he said, still reasonable, waited in vain for an answer, then appealed: "Could I not?"

She was doubtful of being able to escape from this, and cried in a sudden panic: "Let me go home."

"In a moment," said he; but the path was narrow and he was broad, and he made no move.

"The pretty Madeloun — the pretty Madeloun," says he then, with a sigh that came oddly from his figure. She looked at him, wondering, inclined to laugh.

"Let me ask you a question, Madaleno: do you believe — in the bottom of your heart — do you believe the rascal will come back?"

She glanced from him to her ring, then back again; and found no answer.

He still looked at her hard. "Because they never do. I have been young — and I know," said he.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

For the moment he had forgotten her, as he gazed across the darkening valley. It was perhaps one of the grotesque limestone shapes standing out against the dimness, that became to his vision the figure of a girl, not unlike Madeloun, her dark face tinted sweetly by the blossoms of the Judas-tree under which she was standing. He was saying good-by to her, going out into the world to make his fortune . . . And the world had been too much for him and he had sought a living from the Church . . . and he had never gone back. . . . And whether she had died young, or had married another, or was still waiting in a loveless old age, he never knew. . . . His hand fumbled for his rosary and his lips mumbled a prayer or two.

Madeloun perceived the softening of the grim face, and though she could not interpret its meaning, she seized the chance for her little appeal:

"I never wanted to be a nun — never; but my mother was always talking of it — I don't know why . . ."

"Wait a moment," said he, while the light of reminiscence was not altogether gone from his face. "Perhaps I can tell you something of that. Look now — where there are three girls in one family, there is always a question of the dowry — eh?"

Madeloun turned away. When would they make an end of the old argument that yet told nothing? "Is my father so poor?" she asked. "I did not know."

Father Gougoulin hesitated; he could not conscientiously call Borel poor. "But you see," he insisted, "it is better not to marry at all, than to marry unfittingly.

THE BEGINNING OF THE SIEGE

And there are other states — well, we will not go into that. It is necessary to believe that your parents have your welfare at heart."

She looked at him, thinking, but dumb to find words for the thought that oppressed her. "May I go now?" she asked suddenly.

"And the ring?" he insinuated again.

She fought: "Whatever happened — and there is no need to tell you how it came about — I am betrothed now, and I will not put aside my ring for anybody! What you think of him — what anybody thinks is no matter — he will come back and save me from the convent . . ."

He shook his head over her: "Child, child — it is not needful to speak as though we were trying to force you into that blessed state. You do not realize the high privilege that is offered you — only that. Nothing is further from our thoughts than to force you — but when you shall come to see — well, well. But your sin now is rebellion. Put away all thoughts of such matters and let the will of God work as it must . . ."

Very fine words — these, was her thought; but what did they mean? Aloud she asked: "What am I to think of, then?"

"Think of obedience," said he sternly, "that is a daughter's first duty."

Seeing that she was more bewildered than ever, he added pleasantly: "And remember two things. Your gay stranger will not come back. And you can never be made a nun without your own consent. The special grace of God must be sought humbly, and needs not to be

THE GOLDEN HAWK

thrust upon the reluctant and rebellious heart. Keep that in mind and — come to Confession next Sunday. You have been neglectful . . .”

He left her more than puzzled — aghast at what seemed to her the quick changes and inconsistencies of his attitude; but enough she understood to be aware that some siege of her spirit had been begun. All that evening she pondered how best to resist, and questioned how long she might hold out, if *he* was slow to come, for of yielding she had no thought. She had a dim forecast of endless words, dark, insidious, insupportable; and of herself clinging desperately to her love of life until help came. . . . Poor child! In her mind *help* had all too quickly come to be a synonym for *Trillon*.

“Up-there” in Castelar, are no great deeds, no adventures; but there, as everywhere between earth and sky, the little troubles seem infinitely great, and human hearts cry out for the help that tarries long.

CHAPTER VII

THE LETTER

THROUGH the summer she fell much into the way of leaning over the high parapet of her garden, as she had done the day when he came climbing up the long white road, out of the lower world. In her dreams she fancied again the *zoun-zoun* of his violin, and the song of Magali was ever on her lips, but halted at the first bars. She grew a little thin and pale with unwonted pondering; and he did not come.

One day — the vines were ripening then — she had leaned back among the branches of the almond-tree, weary of her watching, when she heard below a whistling of that same sweet tune.

Her face was pink as almond-blossoms when she bent over and saw — the postman.

He was looking up and laughing: "If I had a letter for you?"

"That will be the day when you write me one," says she, pale again but trying to jest.

He held up a large square envelope: "Read, mademoiselle." He pretended to spell out her name; but she was used to his teasing ways.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"Throw it," said she, her sadness returning. Her father sometimes had letters from people engaging rooms to stop a night or two — they rarely stayed longer at Castelar.

"I wonder," said the postman, "that you are so indifferent to a lover; but it may be that you have too many."

He tossed the envelope with a dexterous flip so that it struck her hard and was crushed against her breast.

"But if you threw them all at my head like that!" said she, returning to her bench to smooth out the bent missive.

O Holy-Maries-by-the-Sea — miracle! It was her name written on the outside. She caught it swiftly to her heart, with a little unintelligible love-note, as she rocked backwards and forwards. Then she grew ashamed, and laid it on her lap and looked at it from afar.

It was a big black scribble — she had judged he might write like that, when he gave his mind to writing. And the stamps were so strange, and so many! She thought he must be rich already to send such a letter. And the postmark she could not read at all; it looked a mere jumble of consonants that did not belong together.

"Madeloun!" came her mother's voice from the doorway.

As she answered, the letter went swiftly between the folds of lisse that formed her little *jaudau* or front, and her fichu of yellow-and-white print. Perhaps the postman would forget what he had given her, though that was unlikely; perhaps he would have the instinct not to tell, being a good friend of hers. Certainly, it was as well to be cautious while one could.

THE LETTER

"Madeloun," said Mère Borel, "Father Gougoulin wishes to see you now."

For the first time in many days the girl heard this familiar message with indifference; and making no protest, folded her work and turned to go.

Her mother, fully prepared for defiance and argument, stood watching her from the doorway, but she did not look long enough or far enough, for as soon as the girl had passed under the black archway leading up to the church and the presbytery, she turned aside by a path that was a mere slit between ruined houses and rock. She did not mind that she was stung fiercely by nettles all the way — freedom was purchased cheaply at that price; nor did she think of the retribution that would fall upon her in the evening. For the moment she was safe, and her treasure was at her heart.

She ran without stopping, through the hollow courts of the old castle, and paused at length on a sort of terrace near the edge of the cliff. Then she remembered a safer place, and began to descend by a path invisible, save that here and there was the mark of a footstep — the secret path which, once discovered, might have led to the storming of the castle by besiegers climbing in single file. And perhaps it so happened more than once. Madeloun fluttered down lightly, knowing the place by heart, until she came past the ancient postern, now open to the winds, and onward until presently she reached a chamber almost like a cave cut out of the solid rock, overlooking the foothills and the plain. Few people knew the place, or cared at least to visit it; but there had once been stopping at the

THE GOLDEN HAWK

Cabro d'Or a learned man, to whom she had shown the spot; and he had explained to her how it had once been a dwelling of her ancestors when they were savages — a thing hard to believe. But he had pointed out the granary in the floor, the cupboard in the wall, the little crib in which had been tethered a goat perhaps, or some other beast, and the mark of the ring on the wall to which it had been tied — many signs of habitation by a wild life that had passed away and still was beating in her veins. Some such things he had said, and she had listened, though she had not understood them very well.

But the place was the retreat she wanted; and she cuddled happily on the floor, with her arm on the ledge of the rudely cut window, while she studied her envelope, eager yet fearful to open it. It was not long before she reached for a silver pin from her coiffure and carefully slit the cover from end to end. The dear fat letter! She put in a cautious finger and drew out a great roll of paper. He could talk — assuredly he could talk — on paper as well as with the tongue; and he must have much to say to her to spend such a deal of money on stamps.

It was large writing and beautifully plain to read; and the first words that flashed upon her sight, as she unfolded the big sheets, were in the dear native tongue — not in French: "Little flower of my heart — "*Pichouno floureto de moun cor.*"

She drank in the meaning and laid her face to the sheet, and wept; and yet when he went away she had prayed against him as against the devil. Oh, the magic of the sun can do more than that!

THE LETTER

Presently, she began at the beginning, with a careful tracing finger; but at the very name of the place from which it was written, she stuck fast. *Càspi*; when she had spelled it through, she was no wiser than before! It seemed strange to her that he should be living in a land that was as foreign to her as the moon. With a sudden thought, she fluttered over the pages to the end, to make sure that the letter really was from him. Yes, at the bottom of the last sheet she found his name: "Trillon — of the race of the Trinquetailles." That was his way — nobody else would have said that; but the writing was small and spidery like that of a fine lady once seen by her, and utterly different from the big bold penning that she had thought his. These mysteries only the letter could solve. She overcame the reluctance that fought with and almost overpowered her eager desire; and she read the message sentence by sentence:

"Little flower of my heart:

"First, you must know that, never having troubled my head about writing at the school, and this climate being hot — hotter than any day you have ever seen, my pretty — I have hired a fellow from Aix, who happens to be here, like myself fortune-hunting, to put down for you these few words, hoping that they find you as well and happy as they leave me . . ."

(It must be confessed that she frowned a little at the picture of Trillon happy; but when was he otherwise?)

"If you would know where we are, it is at a café by the water-side at (oh, the dreadful name!) under a mountain so big that you could set your little Alps on end and they

THE GOLDEN HAWK

would not reach to his top. Well, as I began, it's a fellow from Aix who is writing on the crazy table, while I drink my —" (well, she could not make out the word, but it must be some strange liquor of the country). "I shall pay him what comes to twenty-five francs in this land, for his piece of women's work; and if in the end, when he has read it over to me, I find he has left out anything I meant to say to my little flower, he shall have twenty-five bangs on the head —"

("Oh, the braggart!" she cooed, in delicious joy.)

"— instead of the last money I have in the world, except enough for the stamps to send this letter; and to pay for the drinks."

(This was sober news. Madeloun felt as if a sudden dash of rain had swept in through her rock-window. But the sun was shining as brightly as before.)

"Well, then, you will want to hear what has happened to me. When I left you 'up-there,' my little flower of the rock, — do you remember how we climbed to the castle, and how we came down together?"

(Remember? The sun poured a silver shower upon her and her pages, and for a while she heeded it no more than did the little brown lizard over her head. Then she struck the sheet in sudden anger, and read on.)

"Afterwards, I took the straight road to the sea, for I have always thought that more lies across the water than on the hither side — more and easier to be got. I went down with some of the mule-carts carrying stone to the valley; and it was merry work singing to the jingle of the bells. The fellows had some good stories too . . ."

THE LETTER

("So soon!" she cried. "So soon after! Oh, how could you?")

"And in the plains there were market-carts enough. I had always a lift for what I could tell, or a twitch or two of the violin. I don't suppose you had dried your tears — "

("The villain! Oh! the conceited wretch!" she cried, and would not read on for a time; but in the end curiosity impelled.)

"— before I was tucked away among the wine-casks on a vessel bound from Marseilles to this place — I spare the writing of it when I can. It cost me no more than two buttons to get a boatswain properly tipsy, and to buy food until I was ready to come on deck. Fortune — save for you, little flower, I should call Fortune my sweetheart; but you would be jealous — the second day out, while I was meditating upon times and means, Fortune sent a gale that blew a fellow overboard. I myself was seasick — very bad — but that is no matter. So I waited until the wind had settled, and the captain's mind, and my stomach, and I went up under the stars, and said: 'Here's a pair of hands for those you have lost.' He did not seem as grateful as you would think; but I spare you his cursing. In the end he graciously permitted me to assist the cook and to clean out his cabin, polish brasses and the like. It would have been degrading; but I gloried in the thought that it was all done for your sweet sake, *mignoto*. What hardship was messing in oily dish-water when I would have drunk up the seas to come to you — ?"

("And he was going away, all that while," she observed somewhat dryly.)

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"And what was taking out the guts of a fowl, when I was ready to dig into the bowels of the earth for your adornment —?"

("Tut!" says Madeloun, or the equivalent in her Provençal.)

"When we came to land, I was as sound as a rock and as gay as a mating swallow —"

("Indeed! And, indeed!" said young madam; and the continued existence of the letter was threatened.)

"—with my clothes rather the worse for deck-swabbing and so on, almost buttonless, because of little needs by the way; but in my pocket money that I had earned, and some that I had won. I knew I should not be long getting more — it's my religion, you know, belief in my luck. For any other faith, I was brought up too near — under the very wing of the Popes . . ."

("I must have enough for both," says she, with a pretty maternal air. "Santo Mario, but he is a wicked man!")

"You might have measured my fortunes those first days by the coming and going of my buttons. One is always safe, I know, about your sweet neck . . ."

("Ah, Santo Mario Madaleno!" — her hand went up to her throat, for the words were true.)

"It came to be a useless bother sewing them on and cutting them off. After a time I took to casting them abroad as a man plays with counters; and usually they came back and brought luck with them. At present, however — for the moment — I am nearly buttonless. But that's no matter. We shall see what happens to-

THE LETTER

morrow. So you may imagine me, wandering far, seeing everything, doing what comes to my hand, and thinking always of you . . ."

("Ah, *basto!*" she cries. "I don't believe a word of it. The man is a gabbler!")

"Every night I have said to myself, 'To-morrow I will go up into the mountains and make a fortune for my Madelouneto, but every morning it is so hot, and it rains all the time. One can but lift the hand to throw dice. The digging of diamonds must come later — when the fine dry season is with us. You have no idea what a curious place this is . . .'"

(Nor did she wish to know, she told herself with a sob. What was this far-away land to her? She must have skipped some sentences, as she read on:)

"Come, now, if you could only fly across the ocean to me, should we not be happy as a king and queen together? I should come and fetch you, only the heat, or the fever or something — I have had the fever —"

(She stopped with a shock of terror, then hurried on.)

"— gets into a man's bones and makes him lazy. Each day I sleep in the coolest corner I can find — safe from snakes and mosquitoes, and each day I say this shall be the last of such a life. (*Pecaire!* the fellow from Aix goes a good pace. Did he put that down I wonder? We shall see.)"

"What was I telling you? Eh, well, little, *little* girl (*chatouneto*), it's a ragged lover you have now, the laughing-stock of himself and the sailors on the quay from all parts of the world. I don't mind. It's money I won from them

THE GOLDEN HAWK

shall pay the fellow from Aix: and to-morrow I get more. I think I am at the end of my words. Look now, what shall I bring you back? Rubies — sapphires — diamonds? The mountains are full of them all, they say. One has only to go with a pick and scrape. And gold is to be gathered like pebbles by the sea, and silver is the dust under one's feet. But it is the getting there, you understand. Once over the ridge . . . but the ridge is far away. However, we shall see soon. Already I can hear you tinkling in the wind with gold chains and jewels, as pleased as a lamb with its first bell. *Caspitello!* Keep up your heart. A man cannot win a fortune in a day."

(What question of hers had he divined that he should seem to answer so?)

"Give me a little month — a week — a year — I care not what, and you shall be as fine, as splendid as any girl in —"

("The Kingdom of Pamparigousto — the Land of Dreams," said she, with tears in her eyes; and yet she did not lose her faith altogether. As she read on, a fear again crossed her, for he seemed to divine her very thought.)

"Words — you say? Boasting — mere breath? There is no answer to that but time. True, I have a hopeful heart; but hope does not conquer the world. You shall judge. What do you want? Vows? Shall I swear never to come home to you empty-handed —?"

("Ah, come — if it be as a beggar!" she sighed, forgetting her anger in sudden loneliness.)

"Truly, I would work my finger-nails off to reach you;

THE LETTER

but a bird of my nature likes to fly back with a tit-bit in his bill."

(He had such a way of putting things!)

"And if I may turn prophet, I say now that I shall come back in a time when you have great need of me —"

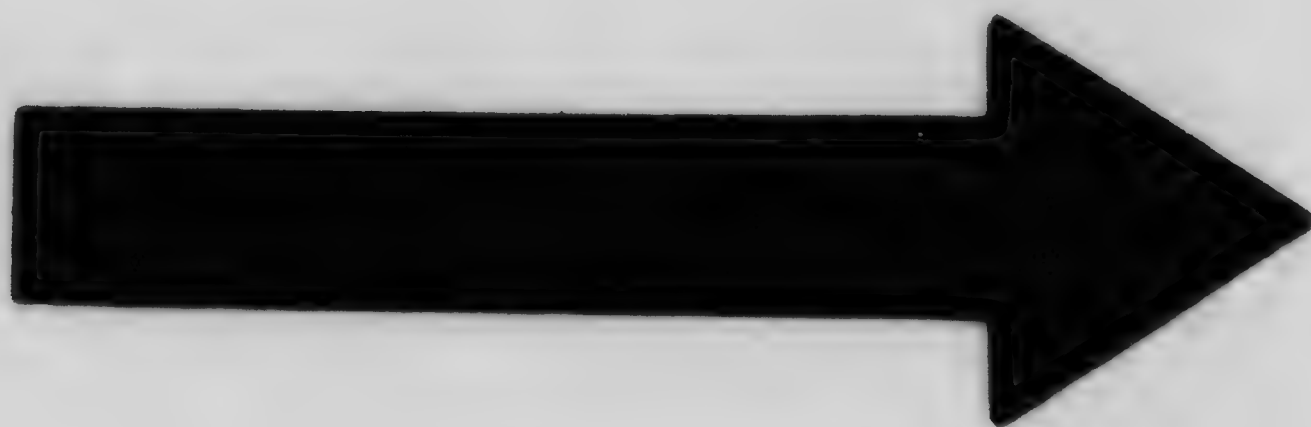
("Ah, but quickly! You must come quickly then," she whispered to the sheets, kissing them down as they threatened to blow away in a sudden gust.

"But however that may be — whether I come or not — we have always the memory of the past — our one great day, when we flew straight into the sun . . ."

She did not know what she was doing. She became a young image of her mother; and the letter lay scattered about the cave in tiny shreds of paper; and those that were near — she trampled and stamped under foot, until she grew dizzy, and fell back against the wall, blind and gasping.

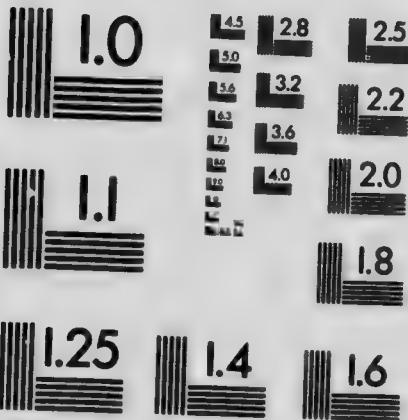
But her rage was not yet exhausted. A deeper, more deliberate malice led her to stoop and gather up the pieces, as many as she could find — for some fluttered away before her eyes — and to throw them into the bottom of the prehistoric granary. Then she sought stones from the pathway, from the cliff-side, leaning perilously to drag them up, lifting, in her blind passion, boulders that she could not have stirred, another day. Inch by inch, and foot by foot, the letter was hidden in its grave; and now and again it was splashed with blood from the girl's cut fingers.

The granary was half-full of stones and rubble — for she clawed at the sand and clay in her first madness —



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THE GOLDEN HAWK

when she flung herself on the rock floor, in the nausea of faintness.

The evening shadows had come when she moved again, and lifted herself on her elbow; and through the throbbing of her brain, remembered that she had left the end of her letter unread.

CHAPTER VIII

THREE TO ONE

AT sunset she went home to whatever fate she might have brought down upon her head; but she lingered a while on the terrace outside her father's inn, reluctant, half afraid to enter.

She looked across the valley to the limestone monsters of the opposite slope, overgrown with furze and high broom; and she watched the tinkling descent of a dusty flock and wondered idly whether the shepherd were Ramoun, whose black eyes burnt her neck every Sunday at church, or only Charloun of Masblanc. . . . It was Charloun.

The sky above the long jagged line of the mountains was like a great shell, ringed with opalescence about a centre of pale gold where the sun had vanished. A moment she dreamed of far-away lands, then clenched her fists to keep back the angry tears, and gazed down the blueness of the valley to the first light that burned like a single star from the *mas* where Jano-Mario lived. Darkness was coming on fast; beyond the crumple of low hills reared like a breakwater at the valley's end,

THE GOLDEN HAWK

lay the ocean of the blue plain with its hovering mists — the Crau. And far to the southward — a second Milky Way upon the earth — lay a faint radiance — Marseilles.

Thence he had sailed to the unknown west — her lover of a day. In the falling darkness, with great spaces all about her, Madeloun's spirit leaped in its chains. *Bon-diéu!* When was there hope of his coming?

And now she had a fierce pang for her letter that she had buried, and certain knowledge that she would have to go back and pick out with pain and tears the fragments, and lay them on the rock-floor of the cavern, and draw from them such pitiable meaning as she could. . . .

But he would never come. Alone in the darkness, she was sure of that. And high behind the steep ramparts she was imprisoned fast within the walls that climb one above the other until they can go no higher — as fast in her ignorance and her youth as if she had been barred in one of the castle dungeons. . . . The ancient gates were wide and rotting on their hinges, and the cobbled way that they call the Roman road led down among the folk of the big world outside; but she — how could she follow it, seeking among strangers him that she loved?

Yes, he had come and gone forever — she began to be sure of that — like a vision seen once in a lifetime of the great *Capoun-Fèr*, the falcon of the wild mountains where no man lives. A moment he had hovered, swooped, and caught her in his claws, only to drop her back into her dull place, while he spread his great wings for the sea. . . . Once . . . once only, she had seen such a flight, such a swoop, such a vanishing; but — the *Capoun-Fèr* had not

THREE TO ONE

dropped his prey. She was a little child then, but the memory had lingered all her days; and sometimes even now, in her dreams, she was haunted by the rush and terror of the moment, and awoke with a cry . . .

The night chill was upon her and penetrated her heart; she turned within doors to judgment.

As she lifted the canvas curtain, she saw at first only the firelight reflected in the blue-and-white tiles of the hearth, and the black outline of her mother stooping over a saucepan there. But at the first sound of her timid footsteps, Mère Borel stirred the frying potatoes with such vigour that oil fled into the embers and made a great blaze, by the light of which Madeloun saw on one side of the table her father beating his fingers against his knees — a sign with him of embarrassment and annoyance — and across the board, the face she most dreaded to see, the fat dark cheeks and grizzled close-drawn brows of Father Gougoulin. . . . It was 'ear to the child's perception that they were waiting for her; and it even crossed her mind that they had sat in darkness to trap her, as fearing that she might through the window see them gathered together, and in her fear run away again.

However that may have been, she felt the tension of the room so keenly that she turned with a swift impulse to flight; but her knees gave way and she dropped on a chair by the door, telling herself that the smell of the hot oil sickened her.

It was Father Gougoulin who spoke: "Light a candle, Auzias — no, never mind the lamp now."

The room was still, but for the sputtering on the fire,

THE GOLDEN HAWK

while the blue match-flame leaped up, wavered, died away, and at last flared into yellow.

Then the priest spoke again: "Give her something to drink." Even with his words, he reached out to the rack at his elbow and took down a glass, poured into it from one of the two bottles on the table, added sugar and water, and held up the mixture with a hand that shook in the candle-light.

"Come and take it," said he gently enough. "Orange-flower-water is good for a hot heart."

She dared not disobey, but she came tossing her head in denial, and dropped to her knees with her apron ready to be carried to her face, awaiting condemnation. But even in her distress she saw that the other bottle before him contained the best wine of the house—the spicy *jerigoulet*—and she wondered to herself whether his heart had not needed the coolness of orange-flower-water. The hospitality accorded and accepted showed—or to her mind seemed to show—that he was in league with her parents against her.

She steadily refused the soothing drink, and he set it away, touching her soft hair a moment, where it sprang from under her cap; and over her head he laughed to her father: "The high stomach of youth!"

The words made her vaguely angry and stirred her to her feet; and there she stood, twisting her apron and ready for what they might all have to say against her.

"You did not come to me this afternoon," began Father Gougoulin, mildly enough.

She bent her head, and only upon a sharp admonition from Mère Borel, added faintly the polite, "No, father."

THREE TO ONE

"You forgot?"

"No, father," said Madeloun, more boldly; and turned a moment as some of her mother's cookery again flew into the fire. The low growling from the older woman sounded scarcely human.

"What, then?"

Madeloun seemed to gather all her courage into her apron, and held it up by its two ends as if she were offering something.

"I had a letter," she answered, "and I went away to read it."

"Ah, ah," said he, very quietly, and then with a sharp intonation: "Ah!"

She faced him desperately.

"Well," said he. "Go on."

She flashed a moment: "It is for you to go on; I have nothing to say."

"*Chut — chut*," came a whistling sound from Auzias; and the frying-pan crashed upon the tiles.

But the priest was unmoved — only stared at her, with his brows making one line and his lower lip protruding.

"Eh, well," said he. "Let me see that letter."

She had a moment's joy in her work of destruction. "I have not got it." She laughed at him, with an under-current of strong passion. "It is read and buried so deep that you will never find it — any of you!" And her heart cried: "God forgive me the lie; it is not all read."

There was a brief silence, during which the priest drew out his watch and studied it. Then he spoke:

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"It is high time. I have nothing more to say. I will let you know" — this plainly to Auzias — "in a few days."

He rose to go, a ponderous figure, to Madeloun terrible.

"What will you do with me?" her fear cried out.

"Nothing, my child," he answered composedly. "You will come to your senses in time."

She saw the futility of further appeal there. She looked at her mother's grim face and away again. She flung herself upon Auzias, clinging to him as if she expected some force to drag her thence. "Father, you will not let them?"

He did not deny her caresses — indeed, he shook her a little, half jokingly, as if to reassure her: "*Càspi*, Lelet, you are a mad girl, and the talk of the village. You had no business with that letter . . ."

"It was my letter," she insisted.

And he: "Well, my pigeon, stop your pecking. We shall see."

We shall see — Trillon's phrase! And what did it mean?

She sat up then and tried to force him to meet her eyes: "Will you save me or must I save myself?"

"The huzzy!" — Mère Borel shook a fist that might have killed rebellion with a blow. "You shall be served out. Wait — just wait!"

It was Trillon again — Madeloun laughed to herself hysterically. All the world seemed to be falling into Trillon's ways; and he who alone could save her was across the sea, and would never come back again . . .

"It's a lot of trouble and talking over a small matter,"

THREE TO ONE

mumbled Auzias, probably unaware that he had spoken aloud, for he jumped a little when the priest turned upon him sharply: "Small? Do you call a girl's soul a small matter?"

"Eh, well," Auzias apologized. "I had no intention to offend. But if it takes all this to-do to save one soul . . . and how about us common mortals who stand outside . . .?"

"Do not talk," said Father Gougoulin sternly, "of things you cannot understand."

For the moment, Madeloun thought her father was with her; but he moved restlessly under her weight. Finally he laughed and said nervously: "I am not a religious man, as you know, father; and you might make a large book out of the things I don't understand, so whatever seems best to you and the wife . . ."

At this, Madeloun went away from him and stood in the centre of the room, and defied them all: "I will not weep for you — I know that is your wish . . . and I will not be afraid . . . and I will be saved . . ."

"Oh, come then, Clapper-tongue!" Auzias tried to reason with her.

But he was interrupted by the priest, trumpet-toned and denunciatory at last: "Have you forgotten the fifth commandment? The wrath of God will be upon you!"

She looked at him straight, and all the fierce savagery that lay deep in her nature rose to the surface. She hissed at him like a little cat.

He made a stride forward, but the mother was before him — Auzias lifting bewildered hands to his temples;

THE GOLDEN HAWK

but the girl was quickest of all, and fled away like a swallow up the stairs and bolted her door.

There was more of ceremony than of piety in the formal blessing with which Father Gougoulin departed from the parents.

Auzias went to the door with him and came back fretful: "*Bon-dieu* — these priests — these priests — why cannot they let a decent man's family alone? What is it all about?"

His wife turned on him like a fury, but being roused from his easy-going indolence, he checked her with a curt: "*Basta* — be still, woman; and set out the supper."

Her hands were shaking as she placed upon the white oil-cloth the potatoes and the salad, the bread and wine and black olives; and then began to dish up for Auzias his great basin of soup.

They ate, wordless, he sighing between his gulps, and she black with suppressed storm that boded evil for the morrow. And Madeloun, alone upstairs, was supperless, as, of course, she deserved to be.

CHAPTER IX

THE PROMISE

It was no longer than the day after that there came into the little inn at the top of the hill one of those sudden irruptions of drama that divide all lives, even the most commonplace, into epochs.

Among the village people there was no accounting for the tragedy. True, the summer had been hot. Sant Marcèu aid us, but the drought had been long and furious! The upper wells had been drained; and the women were worn out with toiling up the steep cobbled way, laden with full jugs. Sant Trefurne, had the springs that cleft the lower rocks and made the valley green, run dry, the people would all have perished!

Ah, it had been a summer of infinite desolation! The silk-worms had come to nothing; the vines had been devoured by the pest; the olives were worm-eaten, and the wheat had been scorched to husks before it was ripe. There had been much sickness for a place that lies so high in the breath of the healing winds. An old man and a babe had been buried within three weeks of each other, in the parched cemetery under the castle wall. Men lost

THE GOLDEN HAWK

heart in the fields and took to spending what little money they had at the cafés. Some there were who passed many hours leaning over the ramparts to see when the rain was coming. But on this August day a cool wind blew from Ventour; and there seemed nothing in the air to account for the disaster that befel. Auzias had gone down to turn over a little earth, and by so doing raise his hopes, if it might be, for the new year. His wife had been gleaning among the vineyards for early-dropped fruit that was still sound enough for comfits and preserves. Neither — by advice, no doubt — had paid the slightest attention to an erring daughter. It is possible that they might have shut her in her room, but that there was neither lock nor key to the door. However, it would have been only for the principle of the thing and the punishment; they knew that she could not get far or come to much danger on that hillside.

She watched them leave the house, and she pushed away the chest of drawers that the night before she had dragged inch by inch to block their entrance, and came down into the kitchen. She heated herself some coffee and found bread, being very hungry; and then she fled away to the cavern cut out of the rock, her mind being wholly bent on recovering as much as she could of her letter.

It was a bitter task lifting all the heavy stones that she had thrown in so lightly. She knelt and dug them out with a pitiable cutting of fingers and breaking of nails. Scrap by scrap, she rescued the paper from its bed of sand and rubble; and lying flat on the rock pieced what

THE PROMISE

she found together with tears. All the morning she was thus, but added scarcely an iota to the sense of her message.

At midday, she gathered up the bits into a clean handkerchief that she had brought for the purpose, and treasured it safely under her fichu; so returned to the inn, with the high purpose of perishing, if need be, before she would give them up.

But in the village there was talk of other matters. They had been seeking her for several hours in every direction. On the outskirts she was seized by one and another, pulled this way and that, and talked to with so many contradictions, corrections, and attempts at hushing, that she was fairly bewildered. Out of the hubbub of words emerged only one clear fact, that her mother was ill — had been found lying on the floor by Father Gougoulin, who had happened that way, and that nobody knew what was the matter with her.

When Madeloun reached the *Cabro d'Or*, she shook herself free and pushed the women back; but they followed her notwithstanding, and crowded the little living-room. On the floor lay still her mother's basket where it had fallen, and the grapes were strewn about. Nobody had troubled or remembered to pick them up, and they had been already much trampled upon, and were making purple marks on the stones.

The first face that Madeloun realized out of the crowd was that of her sister-in-law Emilio, nursing a baby quite unconcernedly by the table.

"Where's Jousè?" asked the truant.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"Come to Paradou for the doctor."

"And father?"

"He is in there. With Rouseto — and some old women."

"Why don't you go?"

"I thought there was enough. I couldn't do anything."

"Am I to go?" — the girl was perhaps asking herself, but Emilio answered with a shrug: "As you please. If you think you can be of any use . . ."

"Is it very bad?" was Madeloun's last question. She was amazed at her own hardness of heart.

And Emilio shrugged again: "We expect the doctor any moment." Then she turned away to some one else; there was scant love between the sisters-in-law.

A moment Madeloun hesitated, with her foot on the steep ladder-like stairway; then she turned away and went out into the garden, by the wall that overhung the valley.

Even there she did not escape the stir in the house: the buzz of voices, faces passing the upper window, the occasional clink of spoons and glasses. Presently, old Zouè came out to her, busily tying knots in a heavy cord.

"Why don't you go up to your mother, Leloun?"

And Madeloun herself wondered: was it indifference, anger lingering from the day before, or the fear of death? She sought a while for her answer: "Does she want me?"

But Zouè was listening and suddenly bent over the wall: "Look — Jousè is bringing the doctor. Eh, well, I must go in and try this" — she held up her cord. "The doctor

THE PROMISE

laughs at such things, but they are good when the breath is short . . . *ai! ai!*"

She toddled shakily back, and Madeloun called after her: "Tell me — if she wants me."

She was not sure that the woman heard; but she sat still by the wall, not interpreting her own mood — possibly she was too frightened to feel any other emotion.

One by one, Emilio's children came out to her, they, too, awed by the things they could not understand. At last came the oldest little girl, carrying the baby, that amid the general tension of nerves wailed dismally. So she had all four of them, and in comforting and soothing them she almost forgot the trouble that had leaped upon the house. They were so restless that at last she told them little tales under her breath, and had them all quiet under the spell of the cockerel that insisted upon seeing the world and made enemies of the wind and fire; and how he crowed in the church while St. Peter was saying mass, and put the Apostle to shame before all the congregation by reminding them of his sin; and how the naughty cockerel came to a bad end . . .

It was the doctor that wanted her, said Zouè, coming again; and she left the children to the old woman, and went within.

It was curious to her how they all stood aside for her, and seemed to open the way, until she came within the darkened chamber upstairs. There were people still, but she did not heed them; she saw only her strange, wild mother, lying grey and motionless, as she had never seen her lie before. A great cry broke from her lips and seemed

THE GOLDEN HAWK

to free the love that had been choked long years by resentment; she sprang forward and fell on her knees by the bed, burying her sobs among its coverings.

Mère Borel opened her eyes and whispered something which only the doctor understood. "She wants to be alone with the girl," said he.

Madeloun did not hear them go — Jousè and his wife, her sister Rouseto, last of all Auzias, who seemed so stunned that they had to lead him away. She looked up only as the doctor spoke to her, with the doorknob in his hand: "A few minutes — a few minutes only. Mind you do not cross her."

She was afraid — bitterly afraid — to be so alone; but her mother gave her no time even for a little prayer.

"Come near," she said, with a feeble echo of her old sharpness. And when the girl obeyed, she felt as if her face were scorched by the hot black eyes that swept it restlessly.

"I am going to die," said the woman then, speaking as if with great effort. "They will not tell me so, but I know it is true. And they have let me send for Father Gou —" It seemed that she was too feeble to finish the word. "He will absolve me of my sins . . . It is strange — when I have been well all my life . . . and I am not old yet . . ." She seemed to collect her thoughts with an effort: "Promise me now — while I can still hear you — that you will do his bidding in all things . . ."

"Mother — mother!" cried the girl, for she understood very well the meaning of this.

"Promise" — said the relentless voice. And Made-

THE PROMISE

loun remembered that the doctor had said she must have her way now, yet could not speak.

"You have been a cross to me all your life — give me this last comfort" — the voice was strangely entreating.

"Why have I been a cross to you, my mother?" whispered the girl; but the woman seemed not to have heard, and continued her own thought: "It shall be an expiation. Ask him how . . . Enough — promise!" The word was like a sword-thrust.

"Wait — mother — wait," gasped Madeloun.

The sick woman dragged herself up on one elbow: "Do you want to kill me now?"

Madeloun shook her head, blinded by tears: "Is there no other way? Think — my mother, think. I cannot understand it all . . ."

"The priest understands," came the reply, "and he says it will be an atonement . . ."

"But for what? Oh, for the sweet Virgin's sake, my mother, tell me why!"

For answer she had only a slow shaking of the head, and then that terrible word, "Promise."

And while she shrank and could not speak: "I thought to see you safely veiled . . . and now I cannot die in peace — I will haunt you . . ."

"But, my mother, you know I cannot be a nun. You know I am promised to be married . . ."

"I have forgotten all that," said the sick woman, and closed her eyes. Suddenly she sat up, crying: "Open the shutters. I cannot see." And as they creaked apart,

THE GOLDEN HAWK

and her daughter came back to her, she said with her eyes still shut and her old grim smile: "Marry? Marry the devil!"

Then Madeloun saw a faint chance: "But, my mother, do you not remember — we all said he was the devil? Mother — you were young once; and you were not made a nun against your will. Mother, if you could think what it means to be like me. I cannot help what I feel. I am as I was made. And if I promise you now —"

"Promise" — the voice had become mechanical, and the eyes were still shut.

"No!" cried the girl, in her desperation.

Suddenly, the sick woman opened her eyes and began to turn her head from side to side: "I cannot see. You have not opened the shutters . . . What is this? Call the doctor . . . Wait . . . What was it I would have you say? I cannot remember . . ."

Madeloun would have fled for help; but her wrist was seized in a hard grip. "Tell me," said the raucous voice, "tell me what it is I forget . . ." She was slipping down, but Madeloun with her free hand tried to stay her, while she herself flung an arm backwards over one bed-post and held herself stiffly. "The priest," she gasped, "it is time. But wait — not yet . . ." She fought hard to recover her thought.

And Madeloun in her turn strove to ward off the curse that threatened her young life: "My mother, if ever you loved anybody when you were young, have mercy on us now . . ."

The woman looked at her strangely. "It will mean

THE PROMISE

many more years of purgatory for me; yet they would pass . . . It is for your own soul, and you will not be saved . . ." Anger swelled and fought with her failing strength. She laughed maliciously: "With *his* blessing goes mine — not otherwise. And your man would be a devil to win that — if he knew what I know . . . Let him come now — the priest."

But when Madeloun turned with a sense of escape, the dying woman seized her by the wrist: "You have not promised . . ."

"O mother!"

"I take it now — your solemn promise . . ."

"Mother — mother —"

"That you will put yourself in the hands of your priest and follow his guidance in all things. Say yes — yes — yes . . ."

"Yes," echoed Madaleno faintly, and dropped to her knees at the foot of the bed, hiding her face again. It was the sick woman herself who lifted her voice and cried for help.

She did not die that night, or the next — not until five days later; but that was the last word she spoke to Madeloun.

CHAPTER X

THE BIRD IN THE NET

THEN with due ceremony six of the women carried Mère Borel to the church and to the churchyard, and the other villagers followed, bearing lighted candles in her honour. When all things had been done in seemly fashion, even to the laying of the big green-and-white tin wreath on her grave, Jousè and his household moved in and took possession of the *Cabro d'Or*; and Auzias and his young daughter were pushed to the wall. The old man had earned his olives and his olive-mill by the hard labour of a lifetime; but the inn was his wife's, handed down to her from her fathers, and by her passed on to her only son.

There was much talk in the village how the strange, dark woman had been the staff of Borel's life; and how, when she was suddenly taken away, his back bent, his jaw dropped, he lost his spring and the laughter in his eyes, and became an old man, content to dodder and drowse in the shade. He passed the management of all things over to his son and his bustling daughter-in-law, who immediately came to accept, as a matter of course,

THE BIRD IN THE NET

what they owed to his giving; and looked with questioning eyes at the dowerless girl.

For a short while Madeloun did not observe how unwelcome she was, being absorbed in her own troubles and dreams; but presently Emilio's head-shakings began to penetrate the cloud of emotions in which she lived, and she felt the spirit of the words in which her sister-in-law frequently addressed her brother: "Come now, the girl does not lack chances. She might marry or turn nun or go to the devil; in any case, we should be rid of her — the lump!" If Jòusè spoke at all in her defence, it was but mildly. He probably urged that she be given house-room and food until something turned up. And if Emilio assented, doubtless she grumbled that it was enough to have the old man saddled on them for God knew how long; and upon Jòusè saying that Madeloun could look after the children, she would have retorted that the children were long since used to looking after themselves, and that the girl would not earn the water she drank.

Altogether it was not many days before Madeloun began to feel that she was superfluous and unwelcome; and to wonder where in the wide world she should find shelter until Trillon came back — if ever he came. But he would not come . . . and that way lay desperation.

She said to Jòusè one day, bitterly and unexpectedly: "I think we two, I and father, must take to the road and beg."

He looked surprised, shrugged, and reasoned with her: "Don't be foolish. You can share our bread as long as we have any; but with four small children growing up, every mouth costs money. The old man must have his

THE GOLDEN HAWK

corner, naturally; but you — if you get a chance to marry —”

“I am betrothed,” said she, “as you know.” The skin was puffed out on both sides of the tight little silver ring, “and waiting — waiting . . .”

He laughed brutally: “You will wait long. These things have been known before. Take Ramoun — or Pèire, and have a hearth of your own.”

She turned away, with her apron to her face, not hearing a stir within the room: “I can find no way out — not one.”

“There is always one, my child,” said Father Gougoulin from the doorway; and how he had contrived so dramatic an entrance, God and himself alone knew.

The girl gave a little frantic twist of the body, as of a hare in a net. At a nod from the priest, Jousè went away; and the old man, white-haired, but unreverend by reason of idleness and indulgence, sat down on the bench where Madeloun had dropped.

He let her cry out her will, and when she looked up, wondering at his silence, he was twirling a letter in his hand.

“I have made all necessary arrangements,” said he quietly.

She stared and then she broke out fiercely: “But I will not — I will not go!”

He soothed her then and began to speak at length. Oh, he talked and he talked well! It was honey and balm and oil — an *aidli*, a very salad-dressing of affectionate interest. He used every means of persuasion known to logic or priestcraft. He left no stone unturned,

THE BIRD IN THE NET

no way of escape unblocked; and he added of his grace many pretty stories of the life of Sant Alari, the patron of the establishment he had in mind. And in conclusion he asked: "Why are you waiting? What is your hope?" And before she could open her lips to speak, he answered himself: "A chimera." The unknown word, with its weighty possibilities of meaning, seemed to damp her courage altogether. She hung her head, wordless, almost conquered.

"Well, then," said he, after a pause of looking across the valley, "it is settled."

"And when Trillon comes back?" she faltered.

"When — when —" he laughed easily — "well, when he comes, if he is all that you say, let him try to get you."

She looked rather shocked, and he hastened to add: "But the safety of your soul is more important than any happiness you could find in the world, dear child."

"Why is my soul more important than Nanoun's or Jano-Mario's?" She felt that she was making her last stand.

"Not more important," said he, "not more important, but more imperilled."

"Why?"

He moved impatiently. "There is no need to go into that. Leave it for heads wiser than yourself; and be mindful of your mother's wish — of your promise. Besides — what else is there for you to do?"

For the moment she considered the possibility of Ramoun or Pèire. But how was she to bring them to know her need quickly enough, even if — O God, no, it was

THE GOLDEN HAWK

impossible! And how could she tell this old man, outside confession, the thoughts of her heart? And she must decide quickly.

She looked down at the curving white road whence help must come if ever it were to come: "O blessed Virgin! What shall I say?" she signed.

He rose and stood looking down upon her. "There is no need to say anything now. You promised what was necessary when your mother died. Make ready to come with me to-morrow; and all your troubles will tail away of themselves."

"To-morrow — oh, to-morrow?" she cried, growing a little pale.

He spied how she was clutching her swollen third finger.

"This must be severed," said he, touching the silver ring.

She hid it quickly as if in defence.

"Once the step is taken," he purred, "there will be no more rebellion."

"A year!" she entreated. "Let me wait a year . . ." And to herself: "He must come before then; and if not . . . as well there as here . . ."

"It is not convenient," said he, with a jerk of the head towards the house, "as you see for yourself very well."

"Till the winter — only till the winter!"

"That would make no difference to me; but for Jòusè it means six months more with an extra mouth . . ."

She flushed at the brutality: "Jòusè wouldn't mind; and it is my father's house . . ."

"Is it?" he asked. "Is it?"

THE BIRD IN THE NET

"And my father — oh, where is my father? He would not let them take me away."

"You speak as though some one were compelling you," he said sternly. "It is all for your own good. We might turn you out into the street to starve."

"I could work," she pleaded, with a flash of a new idea. "I could go out into the world and work. I am old enough. I could go into service?" she urged.

"True," he answered, and meditated, and after a pause repeated, "True. But — it will not answer. You must be ready to come with me at the end of the week."

She fell on her knees and pressed her face against his plump hand as it lay on the bench. "A month — only a little month. Just until . . ."

He did not help her out. "Until what?" he asked presently.

She could only repeat her futile: "A little month!"

He changed his mode of attack: "Should you like to be a month more with Emilio? You are sadly in the way. There is not room for you and the children."

"My father gave them all he had," she said then, with stormy bitterness; and got to her feet and dashed away the tears, "all; and they grudge his daughter a crust of bread. Not Jósè — no; but that woman. I think her parents came from the stingy North!"

"You forget," said he. "It was your mother's doing, and she provided for you as well; but you fight her wish. You forget your promise —" he paused for effect and sighed — "and she not dead a month."

She gave one long desperate glance at the empty

THE GOLDEN HAWK

road, then she yielded: "I will go with you next week, if —"

"Next week? This," said he remorselessly.

"Four days," she thought piteously. "Four days — what could happen in four days? St. Julian, speed all travellers! — but what could happen in four days?"

He was kind, now that she showed signs of tractability. "After all," said he, "this is not final. It is a year of testing — of trial, to see whether you are fit for the Holy Life. ^{It is} a privilege accorded only to the few — you may not be chosen. But for your mother's sake, you must try it. At the end of the time, if you are unhappy, you may perhaps come out again . . . and God knows what will be your fate."

She found in his words a gleam of hope. If she were very good and patient for a year — a long, dragging year of four seasons, twelve months — and how many days? — each day a little eternity, she might yet be saved from a living death to the sunshine and the love that she craved.

"And then," she said aloud, betraying her hope in her voice, "and then — Trillon —"

Sudden anger flamed in the old man's heavy face: "May his own evil fall upon him! He is to blame for all this rebellion."

"And if so?" she asked saucily, by no means seeing her danger.

"If so" — he was still purple-red — "you shall not have him when you do come out — granting that he ever returns, the scamp! Your mother left you in my charge, and I refuse absolutely . . ."

THE BIRD IN THE NET

Blindly she tried to ward off the peril: "O father — no — no —"

"And her curse and mine be upon you if ever you marry that man!"

For a moment she was stunned by this new misfortune, then she clutched his sleeve: "Unsay it — unsay it — or I . . ."

Perhaps he saw in this folly of hers a stronger leverage to move her; certainly he admitted to himself that he needed all the help he could gather, since he could not dream of telling her the reason that he hugged close in his dark heart. And he was very sure that he was right.

"Unsay it?" he repeated; and the words that came now were so hot and rapid, that she had much ado to follow them. "Unsay it? They whisper here in the village that your man is possessed of a devil. Eh, well, he will need be to get my consent to such a thing, or to do away with my curse if he goes against me! Oh, I have heard stories enough of the braggart! He can do anything, can he? Well, let him try. Let him make the rocks blossom and the hills bear good fruit . . ." He paused for breath, staring across the valley; and perhaps what he saw there turned his thoughts, for he went on with a sudden dash of cunning: "Look you, Madeloun, suppose we lay aside, for the moment, the question of your soul — God forgive me that I do so even for a good end! Put that aside, even then I cannot marry you to the first penniless adventurer who comes this way, can I? Suppose he returns — and that is supposing no small thing — what then? Let him settle in the village, let him turn honest citizen and farm

THE GOLDEN HAWK

successfully" — in spite of himself, he chuckled a little — "let him farm some such place as — well, the Pit of Artaban; and I will begin to consider whether — if you show no vocation for the religious life — whether he may be a suitable husband for you."

She was not unaware of the snake behind the flowers, the poison in the honey, of his speech; but she took it in grave silence at first, because she did not know what it might mean; and when she spoke it was only to ask timidly: "But why the Pit of Artaban, father?"

She was looking down and did not see the mockery in his fat eyes, as he said pleasantly: "Because it has never been farmed from the beginning of the world, and it is a good block for the young man to try his wits upon. Come, now, I have met you half-way and given you several loopholes. Do you agree to my terms?"

"Yes," she whispered, because she could not see what else there was to say.

But she looked at him so long and gravely that he wondered what she was thinking about. He would not have been pleased to hear that she was pondering upon the curiosities of the Holy Life for which he intended her. She remembered that by reputation he was a gross eater and she had seen him drink; she knew that his house was luxurious, that he received visitors, went sometimes abroad to Arles, to Avignon, even further . . . And she remembered whispers among the old women that he had once been in a flourishing town parish, and had been suddenly transferred to this place for some grave fault that no one had mentioned; and here he had stayed on

THE BIRD IN THE NET

upwards of twenty years, forgotten it seemed by his superiors . . .

Madeloun did not know, nor perhaps did the old women, certainly they did not say, that the little mountain-village of Castelar was a penitential living forced upon such priests as had been guilty of sin, yet not grave enough to warrant that they be unfrocked. But the girl was asking herself whether Father Gougoulin led the Holy Life, and why he wanted her to be a nun. And to neither question could she find an answer.

However, she clung to her little hope for four days, with increasing desperation; and at the end of that time it seemed to her that her heart was broken altogether.

CHAPTER XI

THE RETURN OF THE HAWK

AND yet he came; many months after she had ceased to battle for the troth they had plighted, he came up the white winding road, singing as before, although stripped of his violin.

It was later in the year this time; and if the April sun had been hot then upon his finery, it was the blistering heat of May that, upon his second coming, scorched through his rags.

It was a forlorn-looking hawk, almost piteous in weather-worn clothes of a common greyness. He had moulted all his fine feathers and yet — he was picturesque still. It was impossible for him to be otherwise. His flannel shirt, faded and clumsily patched into an artist's joy, fell open naturally over the brown throat; his dusty trousers were fringed at the side and flared abundantly over the feet. From his peaked straw hat down to his gaily-worked sandals, there was in every garment he wore a touch of the foreign that interested the countryside as he passed by. The men stared at a still gorgeous red, gold-embossed dagger-sheath that swung by his side; the women

THE RETURN OF THE HAWK

looked long at his deeply tanned face, with its untrimmed hair and moustache that seemed to have bleached in the sun as the skin grew darker. Of the dusty coat that hung over one shoulder, it would have been safe to wager that it lacked silver-gilt buttons — almost that it was not half set out with buttons of any sort.

But the state of his attire, if it affected his mind at all, only increased the jauntiness of his step and the flow of his melody. He sang, he whistled to the birds, *bee'd* to the sheep and goats of the mountains, and had a little friendly talk with every being that he met.

When they asked him where he was going, he said to see his sweetheart.

And when they were bold enough to retort with good-humoured chaff, that he was a pretty fellow for love-making, he answered them in all good faith that he hoped she would find him so.

When they asked him where he had bought his clothes, he answered, nowhere, that they were partly exchanges and partly things thrust upon him by those who were not above the weakness of insisting that a man be dressed, however hot the climate.

If they asked him where he came from, he said, the country of the sun where a man might eat off gold dishes, bananas cooked on a silver-plated oil-stove; and where lying by a stream and picking out diamonds was a common afternoon's amusement.

Asked why he did not stay, he said he had had the fever, and a longing had come over him to see his betrothed.

Called upon to show specimens of the diamonds, he

THE GOLDEN HAWK

said that he had come away in a hurry and hadn't remembered to pick up any.

Asked, was he going back, he grinned.

Asked further, if he had made a fortune, he said it was too much trouble, when a man could very well do without, provided he knew how.

If the passer-by had persisted thus far, he usually gave up at this point, and continued his business, feeling a little shy of the madman with the dagger.

So Trillon went on his way among the quarries, and shouted his jests at the workmen sawing their way through the snowy limestone; and they, good souls! stopped and wiped their brows, and tried to recall when it was before that they had exchanged such banter with a bird of strange plumage, not like this one and yet . . .

When he came in sight of the little town crouched on its high rock, he was singing:

"When the rose is in blossom
It must be plucked — ah! ah!"

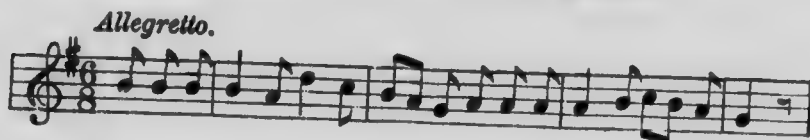
He stopped and his gaiety was a little overclouded, as if the sun had been momentarily obscured, for there he was having his first doubt of what he should find above the ramparts. Then he laughed to reassure himself — laughed so that the caverns echoed; he caught at a tatter of his sleeve to enforce his meaning. His clothes had changed, but not himself — he would be the same as long as his spirit endured. And she — well, if he had judged her rightly . . . if not, there were many girls in the world — only somehow, he had an odd fancy for this one . . .

He gave a long whistle, and went on, narrowing his

THE RETURN OF THE HAWK

yellow eyes to slits, in the vain effort to see her hanging over the wall, or sitting under the almond-tree in the inn garden.

At the foot of the rock where he had climbed before, he paused and whistled a bar or two of *Magali*:



Then he stepped back in the road, the better to look up and see the answer. Nothing stirred.

He sang openly: "I will be the hunter to chase thee," and stopped in amazement to find, instead of Madaleno, two little children, whose heads just topped the wall, staring down at him curiously.

He scarcely knew what thought impelled him; but the next moment he was scrambling breathless from ledge to ledge, in his ears the terrified screams of the little ones as they ran to fetch their mother.

He came up over the wall into a hubbub of voices and a tangle of strange faces peering through the door. As he stepped forward with his air of assurance, they fell back, and one of the children cried again.

"Don't be frightened," he called over to them, "whoever you may be. It's only Trillon come for his sweet-heart."

But the children pushed further away; and the intruder, staring hard to find some one that he knew, passed by Emilio and Jousè, and would not have seen Auzias, had not the old man, with a little spirt of energy, thrust a way

THE GOLDEN HAWK

for himself among them all with his stick, saying querulously: "Let me see! Let me see! It is I that should know."

He came and peered closely: "Holy Virgin, so it is; but she might as well be dead and buried for all the good she'll do you now!"

"Hey?" Trillon caught the old man by the shoulders so briskly that the clutch had to be turned into a support to keep him from going over backwards.

And here Jousè, who hitherto had not found any words on the tip of his tongue, was able to come forward and say angrily: "Let my father go!"

Trillon was quick upon him: "So! He's your father? Well, I'm helping him to the bench" — he made his words true. "He has grown old in a year. And since you seem to be the brother, where's Madeloun?"

"Safe," said Jousè, and could not control a grin.

"Not here — be sure of that," added Emilio shrilly, hushing the youngest child.

Trillon paid no attention to her. "Safe from me, you mean?" he asked Jousè.

"Take it as you like," — Jousè shrugged.

"And so I shall — and fit it into my plans," Trillon answered. He turned upon Auzias: "What's happened?"

"My wife is dead," said the old man, his chin on his stick.

Trillon paused a little, startled — somehow he never took death into his calculations. "Well, and Madeloun?" he asked presently.

THE RETURN OF THE HAWK

The old man shook his head: "She is away."

"Yes, yes, but where?"

"*Hein?*" Auzias considered. At length he said, with a sort of brief awakening of his old self: "The devil take me if I know!"

Trillon turned again to Jousè: "You may as well tell me now as later. I came to see how she was getting on; but *tron-de-bon-goi*, if you hide her away like that, I'll marry her out of hand!"

Emilio broke into violent laughter: "Oh — oh — oh — the vagrant — the lost-bread — look at him!"

Trillon was undisturbed. "You don't like my clothes? I could make you — but it's no matter now. You shall like them some day. Where is Madeloun?"

He flung his coat upon the bench and advanced upon Jousè, who backed away.

"Don't waste my time," says Trillon.

But Jousè was on the far side of the table: "Prove your right to ask the question."

"We are betrothed," said Trillon, laying hand on the stone, and facing him.

Jousè began to shake his head; but there was a sudden whirl in the air, and before any one knew what would happen, the invader was across the table, and Jousè lay pinned to the earth beneath him.

The children clung to their mother, but she was too paralyzed to move or scream. The old man was open-mouthed, shaking over his stick.

"It's a trifle," says Trillon, panting only a little. "Out with it — where is she?"

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"Near Montmajour, in the convent of —"

Trillon had released his throat, for he was already purple in the face; but continued to kneel on his chest:

"The convent of —?"

"Sant Alari," growled Jousè.

Then Trillon arose with a disgusted look, and went over to the wall again: "I would not have believed it of her. She may rot there, for all I care!"

But on second thoughts, looking shrewdly from one to another — at Jousè mumbling unholy words, with his hand at his maltreated throat, at the wife with her shifting eyes and cruel lips, at the old man now futile as a reed, he had a glimmer of the truth and laughed: "Well, I have no doubt you helped her there; but if that's all the matter, we'll soon have her out. Now, if she had been dead . . . yes, I think we will have her out. The little fool! No wonder she did not write — that is, if she can write — I never thought to ask her . . ." With careful aim he smashed a fly that was tickling his wrist, then took off his peaked hat, and for a moment twirled it like a top on his finger . . . "Curious — it's all in the song too . . . 'If you turn white nun' — but I have no mind to be father confessor. I can do better than that . . . and it's only a few hours' journey . . ."

"I'll have the law on you," muttered Jousè.

"God's thunder and thunder of the air and all the thunder that ever was made, shall I have to crack your heads together?" roared Trillon. "But why should I waste my time gabbing here? It's a step or two for a pair of sandals." He swung one leg over the wall. "Run

THE RETURN OF THE HAWK

fetch your policeman — if you have one . . . but I shall come back. Save it up till then — that's good advice. Wait till I'm your brother-in-law."

He was half-way down the rock now; and they all ran and looked over.

"You're a pretty fellow to go a-wooing!" shrieked Emilio, deeming the distance between them enough for safe vituperation.

He stopped his descent and looked up at her, laughing: "Well, to be sure I am — and you know it — and so does Madeloun. God keep you all! You'll be surprised when you see me next."

But how surprised, neither himself nor any of them dreamed.

CHAPTER XII

THE KNOCKING AT THE DOOR

SISTER MARTO always watered her flowers just before vespers, for then the cloisters were most in shadow; and no seraph on the highest peak of Paradise ever wore a more blessedly serene expression than did this ruddy yet frail-looking nun, as she sprayed her roses, her columbines, her daisies, her geraniums, her lilies, her heartsease, her pansies, her nodding fuchsias, her trails of myrtle, her cyclamen, her marguerites — all the treasure of colour and perfume that clouded the old Romanesque columns. No mother ever touched her child with more loving tenderness than Sister Marto uncrumpled the twisted leaves and plucked away the dead, and sought anxiously for signs of mildew, pest, and noxious insects. Early and late she found some excuse for loitering there. In the morning, when the swallows chattered and swooped in a perpetual game of catch-me-if-you-can, from one gable to another of the old yellow-tiled roof, dashing across the open, perching saucily on the very arm — nay, on the very head — of the stone Virgin and Child that guarded the rockery in the centre of the court, the song of Sister Marto intoning

THE KNOCKING AT THE DOOR

the graces of Mary accompanied her pacing there, scarcely louder but even sweeter than the bird-notes; and again at evening, when the ecstasy of the nightingales outside drifted into the cloisters through the door that opened from the rose-garden, she scattered a rain like soft dew-drops, from the well at the north corner of the cloister, and sang a little chant of the joys of Paradise.

In the small sisterhood of Sant Alari there was room for jealousy; but among all the twenty nuns was none who did not love Sister Marto.

Even the novice from Castelar, who after nearly a year at the convent, had not altogether given over sulking on the stone bench by the church door — even Madaleno could not find other than soft answers to the nurse of the flowers. Indeed, of all the nuns, this was the one she loved, to whom she had found it possible to confide something of her trouble and her young despair.

There came an evening, perfect even for Provence in the spring-time, when the air was so soft that it touched the skin like an exquisite balm. Sister Marto was busy with a lily that drooped without apparent reason, suffering it might be from a gnawing at the bulb. She was so intent and so anxious that she ceased to sing; and the silence stirred Madaleno from a dream, as she stood with a hand on each of the two columns between which she was staring.

"Sister Marto," she began, and unheard, spoke more sharply: "Sister Marto . . ." As the nun looked up: "Haven't you finished yet? I want to talk to you. Your flowers — always your flowers — I believe you love them as if they were children!"

THE GOLDEN HAWK

Sister Marto came up to the other side of the archway, brushing away a frown of anxiety over the health of the lily, but not resisting the temptation to pluck at dried leaves, and search for invaders, as she passed along the narrow path.

"Sister Marto," said the girl, "do you know, unless I do something about it, in a few weeks I shall be a nun like yourself?"

The other stared a second, then broke into laughter, spreading out her hands: "And am I such a monster then?"

"You are sweet — sweet," said Madaleno, "but you have found your right place. You have the vocation. Me? I might as well try to be a spider!"

"My dear child —"

"Who is always forgetting her prayers? Forgetting to take part in the services? Dropping asleep when she is called to sit up with the sick? Good Sister Marto, it's all one long penance for me, penance for duties forgotten, penance for penance forgotten, and triple penance for forgetting that I had forgotten to do penance. My thoughts are always elsewhere, and I am always waiting and longing" — she dropped her voice — "for one who never comes. I have been patient — as patient as I could be — for nearly a year. As for the Mother" — passion vibrated in her tone — "I hate her as you hate slugs —"

"*Chut — chut —*"

"And I am afraid of her."

"There is no reason, dear child."

"Oh, I could kill her!" — the girl's fingers closed over her cross as if to seek help against the temptation.

THE KNOCKING AT THE DOOR

"And now you are wicked and will have to confess," said Sister Marto regretfully.

"Confess that I could kill her? The sin shall stay and blacken my soul forever before I will do that! But when I think how the time is coming when I must fight her again, I am sometimes afraid she will look at me — in her way — so hard and steady, you know how — until I have said the vows without knowing that I spoke. And then there would be no undoing — none —" she murmured to herself. "Not even for him — when he comes." She continued aloud pensively: "It would not be the first time that she has made me do things against my will; and then I wake up and find them accomplished. I don't want to wake up, Sister Marto, and find my hair gone. . . . My hair is pretty . . ."

"*Chut — chut!*" said the older woman. "You must not think of such things here."

Then passion was unchained in Madaleno's black eyes: "I think of nothing else all the day and sometimes all the night; and I cry — Jesu, how I cry! Nobody knows — for fear that he will not find me. And I thought when I first came that I had no hope!"

"One does when one is young," said the nun softly, and for a moment it seemed to Madeloun that perhaps she might understand.

"And so it is a sin to keep me here at all," continued the young logician, "and it is you who love me and would not have me commit mortal sin, who must help me to get away."

"Saints!" cried Sister Marto, clutching her rosary;

THE GOLDEN HAWK

then she quietly considered the situation for a moment or two, before she said: "I will not help you to get away. But suppose you go alone — what then? — where then?"

Madeloun shrugged: "No matter. It is a big world."

"And you have no fear?"

"Yes, I am afraid; but not so afraid as of being shut up here all my days. I hate the place and every one in it — except you and your flowers, Sister Marto."

"No, there is much in it that you do not hate — Sister Claro, the portress, for example, and Sister Oursulo, and Sister Aulaio; and the garden, and the birds, and the sun; and the music when we sing, and the little children that are brought to be healed. You do not hate even the soup for dinner, or Zefir the hound. There is much that you love, and more that would bring you joy and peace, if once you could bend your stubborn heart to the will of God."

"But how do I know that it is the will of God?"

"*Chut* — we leave that to those who are wiser than ourselves. Our part is only to kneel and ask the grace of perfect obedience. It was your mother's will, the bidding of your priest — what can you do against those two? In time, you will find your content; but for some of us it takes years . . ."

"For you?" asked Madeloun abruptly.

"For me."

"And why?"

Sister Marto winced a little at the question; but after a moment said quietly: "I was betrothed and he died. Then I came here. It is now eighteen years."

THE KNOCKING AT THE DOOR

"And when did you find your content?" The unwitting cruelty of youth!

"Child, child, you ask many questions" — there was the shining of tears in the blue eyes. "Thanks to the Holy Mother, I have found it. And so will you."

"Listen," said Madeloun. "Mine is not dead. He is out in the world — somewhere — in South America. I do not well know where that is; but it is very far away; and I could never read the name of the place. But look." She drew out from under her habit a tiny linen bag that she had worked all over with forget-me-nots, as Sister Marto saw with eyes that grew dim again in the seeing. "Look." She showed the torn fragments of the letter, yellowed with dust and tears; and knowing now the words on every piece by the size and shape of it, she quickly found the name of the place in two fragments, which she held together.

"Read," said she; but the nun, when she had spelled it out, was no wiser than herself.

"Listen again," entreated the girl. "I cannot have a light in my cell, but whenever there is moon, do you know what I do? I crawl out of bed and I spread these on the floor — though it is cold to lie there — you cannot think how cold —"

"Ah, yes — yes — yes, I know," murmured the other.

"And I try to piece them together so as to make out all the sense; but I never can, for some of them are lost, and through my fault."

"How lost?" came the gentle question; but Madeloun hung her head and would not answer that.

"And you will help me?" she entreated.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"To go to — this place?"

"Ah, no, for I could never find it — and he may not be there now. But to get out into the world and be free to wait for him. I could work — oh, I should work!"

Sister Marto was scarcely as practical-minded as her name-saint; but still she asked: "And how get work? and where? and what could you do? and how should he find you again?"

"Oh, that — all that — later" — was the impatient answer. "He would find me anywhere — at the end of the world. But how escape?"

Sister Marto smiled at this midsummer madness, and asked: "You have told the Mother something of this?"

"When I first came and she cut my ring off, I wept for weeks and weeks, but she was deaf as these columns. So I settled in my own mind that I would wait — wait until it was near the time. But I thought he would have come by now, and that is why I am so desperate. There is only you to help me — you must help!"

"What could I do?" asked Sister Marto, with trouble on her smooth fair forehead. "It is Sister Claro who has charge of the gate. And ladders — the gardener has ladders, but I don't know where he keeps them; and should I help you to risk your life, and turn you out into the world at night — alone — penniless? I could never be absolved of that sin."

"Then must I die here?" stormed Madeloun.

But before Sister Marto could utter the gentle, "We don't die of such things," that hovered on her lips, the answer came from elsewhere, in the form of a tremendous

THE KNOCKING AT THE DOOR

and furious knocking at the outer gate, where hung a cracked bell that was often jangled long before it reached the ears of Sister Claro in her lodge.

"Saints defend us! What is that?" cried Sister Peupètio, who just then reached the turn of the cloister with two vases of fresh flowers for the altar. She set her precious burdens carefully down upon the stone bench, and stood with her hands on her hips; and the three women looked at one another, as the knocking recommenced, with a blustering bravado that struck terror into two of these gentle souls.

But Madeloun flushed hot, and ran down the corridor into the open air, and along the high wall, with its heavy mantle of red and creamy roses, so came in front of the church, whence one can see the great gateway at the end of a long straight avenue of pines. The nuns followed more slowly, but moved by irresistible curiosity. By the time they were all looking down the road, they saw a strange sight between the stretching flower borders, where high above the pink of the roses was flushing, and low on the earth the irises lay in great purple masses along the path, too heavy with their own richness to stand erect. They beheld the aged Sister Claro, wrinkled, dignified, rheumatic, with her skirts drawn high and her veil floating behind her, flying towards them as if in mortal terror of pursuit.

"Oh, for the love of Mary," she panted, "call the Mother quick!" She dropped upon a bench, trying to recover her breath, while Sister Peupètio took example from her haste and fled away.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"What is it? Oh, what is it?" entreated Sister Marto, wringing her hands in helpless sympathy with the agitation of the portress.

Suddenly, Mada'eno laughed; and the two Sisters looked up, struck dumb to behold her tearing off her white head-dress and collar, and flinging them far among the irises. And as she stood before them, with her black hair rippling about her rosy face, and the dimples in her cheeks dancing with the lights in her eyes, it seemed to both good women that some sprite had entered the body of the girl whom they had known as pale, sulky, rebellious . . .

But before they could utter a sound, she had gathered up her long robe and fled away, not after Sister Peupètio, but into the wilderness of garden behind the chapel; and the mysterious words that rang in their ears, together with a strange tinkle of laughter, were: "I think it is Trillon!"



CHAPTER XIII

THE VIGIL

BUT it was long that she waited, peeping from the boskage of the garden.

The knocking at the door was not repeated. She saw the Mother Superior walk past the two Sisters she had just left, her serene and icy dignity untroubled by their turmoil of spirit. And when the beat of her footsteps had died away, there was no sound except the insistent and almost continuous call of a cuckoo. But in any case Madeloun was too far from the gate to have heard the play of voices there. She was tempted to follow, but had a fear of moving. Sister Marto returned within the cloister; Sister Claro hobbled, with injured emphasis on her usual infirmities, in the wake of the Superior; the moments passed and the sun set, while Madeloun, uncoiffed, dishevelled, with both hands against her breast, and every heart-beat showing in her cheeks — awaited her doom.

It came in the slow returning footsteps of the Mother Superior, no whit less serenely dignified, no whit more self-satisfied, than usual. Before the church she paused

THE GOLDEN HAWK

and looked towards Madeloun hidden in the shrubbery, and the girl shrank further into the shadow; then she stopped to examine a cluster of banksia buds, patted Zefir, the house-dog, said a few words to him, and entered the church-door.

And was this to be the end? Madeloun scarcely knew that she had moved until she found herself running along the narrow tortuous paths, catching her skirt on the thorny branches, impatiently wrenching it loose and running again, regardless whether Sister Claro might be watching from her little lodge. Frantically, she thrust open the wicket and stared down the dusty, dusky road. It was empty.

Then she shook the high, wooden gate and twisted her hands vainly against its bolt and bar. No, there was no mad chance in her favour; it had not been left unlocked. She fell on her knees and sobbed; and if Sister Claro, in the little lodge, setting out bread and salad for her supper, did not hear this pitiful crying, she must have been too deaf to warrant her office of portress. But she made no sign — no sound . . . and the walls were six metres high, or more, and crested with broken glass; and there was but the one gate . . . And even if she found a ladder high enough and could carry it to the wall, and climb up to the top, how could she get down the other side without such injury as would make her to be brought back to the hospital and nursed to health again, with secret triumph on the part of those who sought her captivity? If one might die thus — it would be different; but when one was young, one did not die . . . And Trillon had come and

THE VIGIL

gone away. . . What had they told him then? . . . But had he come? . . . Ah, she had small doubt there! It was not only the prompting of her heart that had raised expectation to the fever point these last days; it was her certain assurance that no other man in the world would have knocked thus — with that degree of righteous indignation and furious resolve — except him who had called himself the Falcon of Avignon. . . . He had come for his own — but he had gone away and — what had happened?

For a moment she felt emboldened by the mere passing of his spirit to march up the avenue, and enter the refectory where the Sisters would be having supper now, and before them all demand of the Mother Superior to tell her the truth.

But she lingered — and lingered — perhaps awaiting a return, a sign — and suddenly the air was dark and a light shone through Sister Claro's window. Supper would be over. The moment had passed. Oh, what could she do now but creep into the church and pray — pray hard —

The night wind chilled her and hastened her reluctant footsteps. Near the church she stopped short, choking back a scream of terror at a sudden whiteness on the dark earth; but the terror was turned to tears when, as the wind blew a lock of hair across her cheek, she remembered that this must be her discarded head-dress. As high as had been her hope — oh, the shame of to-morrow!

But rash youth must often walk the bitter way of humility; and Madeloun, remembering the face of the Mother Superior as she had paused near this spot to pat

THE GOLDEN HAWK

the hound, crushed the dewy sweetness of the irises beneath her feet, and stooped to gather up these emblems of her soul's servitude.

The refectory windows were black; and she was hungry, poor child! She remembered that there was to have been the salad she liked best. But they had all supped and gone their ways, and left her alone with her trouble. She had no desire now to pray; she thought only of getting to her cell and weeping out the night, before she should come to judgment on the morrow. If only her heart would break . . .

She stole like a shadow along the empty corridors and into her room, with a little gasp of relief when the door opened to her turning. Somehow, she had feared it might be barred against her.

There is a certain ceremony through all the wild sorrow of youth; in its most extravagant moments, it is rarely quite without self-consciousness. Be sure it was no feigned grief that caused the young Madeloun to fling herself on her little pallet and toss her arms into the air with a stifled outcry for help; but yet, she would have been more comfortable, even in her very genuine trouble, had she undressed and gone to bed properly; and she did not wish to be more comfortable. She wished — unconsciously, no doubt — to realize to the full the complete misery of her position; and with a great rioting and waste of youthful vitality, she did so.

The night passed on, and the moon rose and whitened the terrace outside her window. She heard the three church-bells, centuries old each, strike the time singly

THE VIGIL

and in unison; and it was a matter for faint comfort, or at least for pride, that she had not missed an hour up to twelve, nor a quarter up to — when all at once her ear was attracted by an extraordinary sound outside her window. It was not frog or cricket or bird, but it contained elements of the notes of all three; and it sounded appallingly near. She set one foot on the floor and listened; and just as she had decided that she had imagined the noise, she heard it again, far away down the terrace. She had a momentary dread of what might come in upon her from the still moonlight; and she ran to the window and closed the shutters. Even so she could hear the sound ever louder and louder, but with frequent pauses, as if the strange beast that uttered it were feeling its way cautiously, or pausing for some unknown purpose.

With a sudden terror of ghosts, Madeloun ran to her door to call for help, and turned the knob; but it resisted her utmost efforts. If she had not been barred out, certainly she was locked in. Ah! they expected her to try to escape then?

A sudden exultation tingled in her blood — a return of her intuition that he had been there, that he would come again. She lost all fear, and flung wide the windows. The night breeze streamed in with the moonlight and lifted her tangled hair.

Nearer came the hoarse cry, but there was no other sound. She could not see anything in her little looking-glass; but with frantic fingers she fumbled for her brush and comb, and shook her untidy attire to rights; then pressed against the window-frame that reached but a

THE GOLDEN HAWK

little below her breast, she held herself still, but in the full blaze of light, waiting — waiting.

A shadow crossed the moon and the room was dark; it retreated and her dazzled eyes were again filled with light; then it fell for the second time, and the curious low croak was at hand; and again it retreated, and the moon blazed upon her half-smoothed, riotously-curling hair, her brilliant eyes, and hands clasped as in prayer against the habit that she had robbed of all its nun-like attributes; and at last a third time the shadow fell, and she was drawn up and up, out of the darkness of her cell, up and up, it seemed into the very heart of day; and a warm stillness enfolded her, and she was quiet after all her weeping. Quiet — a long time — as he was quiet, until, with remembered caution, he just lifted her from her feet and carried her into the shadow of the great plane-tree that faced her window.

There she stirred and clung to him sweetly, with soft frantic laughter that for a time robbed her of all speaking; and when the words came, they were only:

“And the noise was — the noise was —?”

“The Falcon of Avignon,” said he, and kissed her, as on that far-away day of their first meeting.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FALCON AND THE NIGHTINGALES

WORDS? What words were needed? What could words say? Trillon began to laugh. "I thought I should find you that way," said he.

Madaleno freed one hand and pressed it across his lips, with the result that he kissed it and laughed the more.

"They will hear" — she whispered, looking over her shoulder.

"Let them hear. I should rather like the Mother Superior to come upon us now. I have you and I shall keep you. What can she say?"

"Do you mean," asked Madeloun, "that I am to go away with you?"

"What else should I mean?"

She considered this a moment, then: "It was you this afternoon?"

"*Sarnipabièune*, who else?"

"But you did not come in," she insisted, a bit piqued to remember that all her woe might have been spared.

He drew her closer still, and patted her cheek lovingly, yet with a tinge of rebuke: "Ah, Lounloun — Leleto —

THE GOLDEN HAWK

Leleto, it was not my way. You have yet to learn the ways of Trillon."

"Tell me about it." She lost future and past in her present content; but for the moment curiosity lifted a peak above the sea of her bliss. What had happened between him and the Mother Superior?

"Tell what? It was simple. I knocked. You heard me? I intended you to hear. They would not open more than a wicket the length of a nose. It would have taken time to batter down the gate. I demanded your Mother Superior. She came — *pecaire!* — as fierce as Artaban! I let her talk; and when she had done, I made her a bow which I hope she saw through the little hole.

"'Heaven save you, madame,' said I. 'I have no doubt you are a holy woman; and I have heard some talk of holiness, too, being native to Avignon, the city of the Popes. But with all your holiness you have not divined, perhaps, that I had an object to gain in making this disturbance, as you call it. Have I your leave to explain?'

"So, her words being gone for the moment, I began: 'When, madame, you did me the honour to receive my promised wife under your roof —'

"'Hey? What?' cries she; 'and I could see her stoop to peer through the wicket. And by that alone I judged that your precious brother and his wife had not turned me off on a false scent, when they declared that you were here; but I wanted to be sure.

"'You had no idea, it may be, that she would trespass upon your hospitality so long; however, in the end I am

THE FALCON AND THE NIGHTINGALES

come to take her away, as soon as ever the banns may be read.'

"This she pretended not to understand, so it was my turn to screw my eyes to the wicket; and a good look I had at her as I said: 'I mean Madaleno Borel, who before your silk-worms — if you have any — begin their cocoons will be Madaleno Trillon.'"

"Wicked — oh, wicked!" cooed the girl, and for a time stopped his discourse altogether. "But suppose — suppose the Mother should come to her window now —?"

"Which is hers?"

"There" — she pointed.

"Come!" He made a movement as if to draw her thither and continue his love-making in the very face of the Church.

But she was too earnest to be overruled: "Remember, you do not know her, and I — sweet Virgin! You cannot think what she may be able to do."

"Nor can she think what I may be able to do. She defied me royally to come and take you if I could; but she never once denied that you were here — which was all I wanted."

"'Madame,' said I, 'now that we have warned each other, it becomes a game. God be with you! My thanks.' It is not the way of Trillon to do things under the rose; and if she is sleeping peacefully at this moment, it but shows her lack of sense. Your holy women are not always lacking in shrewdness . . ."

"*Ai! ai!*" cried Madeloun, suppressing a little wail. "I had forgotten."

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"Forgotten what? But tell me after. Back into your cell now and collect what you want. We must take the road so as to get somewhere by morning."

"*Ai! ai!*" she sobbed on his shoulder. "You will have much to do. The world is between us; and they are meaning to make me take the veil."

"How then?" asked Trillon brusquely. "You will not come to-night?"

"Not to-night nor any other night until you have done what cannot be done; or my mother will curse us from her grave, and we shall never prosper."

"Hah!" says Trillon, and released her, to rub his hands together. "What is this?"

"Have you come back very rich?" she asked wistfully.

"Not so rich as when I went — but what of that? It needed time. And was I to wait forever for another look at the sweetest face on the earth? Heaven save me, you might have married another! And look you — I was right."

Her lip drooped, but he was quick to continue:

"If it is only money that you want, my pretty, eh, well —"

"But soon? In three weeks — or four?"

He pulled his falcon tufts and thrust out his chin: "Soon? In three days you shall have a handful."

"But even so," she sighed, "it would be of no use. I promised my mother when she died that I would do as Father Gougoulin bade me, and he has put me here . . ."

"Then I must see Father Gougoulin," said Trillon calmly, "no more than that."

THE FALCON AND THE NIGHTINGALES

"But he would never let me out again . . ."

"We shall not ask his permission," interrupted the lawless one.

"And even if he did, he swore in his anger that I should never marry you — oh, he swore it so strongly that there is no breaking . . ."

"Leave it all to me," said Trillon. "This is not women's work."

"But he said we should be cursed by himself and my mother . . ."

"He seems to be a meddling old fool; but he can be made to unsay it."

"I don't see how," she insisted piteously.

"My pretty one, your head was not made for such matters. But let us inquire into this thing a little. What reason did he give for keeping you here?"

"My own good," she said, between tears and laughter. "He wants to save my soul."

"It sounds disinterested. But it is not enough. No other?"

"Eh, well, there was no money for me. Nanoun and Rouseto had their dowries, and Jôusè took what was left. That was my mother's doing — it was all hers, you know. My father had only what he earned . . ."

"Money," says Trillon, "I could always do without. Let us pass over that. There must be a deeper reason somewhere . . . we shall find it. Meanwhile, I get you away . . ."

"No, no," says she. "You must make him unsay the curse. And yet you cannot, for it was a strong one," she

THE GOLDEN HAWK

continued piteously. "The miracles you would have to do — you would need to go to a witch . . . and even then . . . Oh, he said terrible things about making the rocks blossom, and I know not what, before he would give way. And he pretended that it was all for my good, and he said that if I could not undertake the religious life, he would let me go free again. Only the Mother will hear no word of that now — I cannot tell you how she makes me feel. But he said, too, that if you should come back and live in the town, and turn farmer like anybody else . . ."

"Why all this?" asked Trillon suddenly.

"I don't know. But he said that when you could farm the Pit of Artaban . . ."

"And what is that?" he interrupted again.

"Waste land — sheer rock," she said, in a tone of utter discouragement. "You could never make a living there."

"My pretty," said Trillon, "do not slander me. So far I have made a living without great difficulty — certainly, I am very much alive. But if your priest likes to prescribe where I am to continue the process, eh, well —"

"I think," she said mournfully, "it would be as easy as to walk like a fly up the sheer cliff of Briazon . . ."

"Where is that?" he asked.

"Ah, it is the side of the castle where the Marshal of France had his armies for a month with ladders and engines, and at the end of the time, I have heard my father tell, he had to march away again because he could not get a foothold. . . . Could you climb up there?"

"Undoubtedly," says Trillon. "And can I surmount

THE FALCON AND THE NIGHTINGALES

these obstacles? My dear child, trust me; I am not a Trinquetaille for nothing."

She felt that the case was hopeless, and yet she drank in his words as if they had been the utterance of a saint. But when he fell silent — in reflection, but by no means in despair — she suddenly wrung her hands against her breast, with a full renewal of her trouble.

"Not even you — not even you —"

"*Hopo! Tajort!* Presently—presently," he said at last, in a voice no less strong than usual. "By your sacred good sense! Look now, I leave you here for two weeks — two weeks and a half — longer. Be good — be patient, be cheerful—even if I do not return until the last day—and not till midnight. Nothing can happen till then. There are other novices, *hein?* What, two? Ah, well, defer to your holy Mother in all things; and at the last moment, if not before, your hawk will swoop and away you go, the congregation a-stare, and the Mother Superior wringing her hands . . . Eh, what? Smile!"

"You will work all these miracles?"

"I and no other."

"But —"

"No but."

"My mother's curse."

"No curses."

"My conscience —"

"Shall be as white as the collar and coif they want to strangle you with."

"And yours?"

"Huh!" — his laugh was shorter than usual. "The

THE GOLDEN HAWK

Trinquetailles sailed up the Rhone, in their skiffs, their barges — I know not what — a thousand years ago and more — old Mercadou once told me. And they burned and robbed and killed, and did as they pleased. But I have no more liking than you for the curses of the dead. They spoil the sunshine by which we live. *Chut!* the nightingale! Come, sit on the parapet here in the shade and be still; and he will come so close that he will sing almost on your shoulder. And so you may imagine that it is your hawk trilling to you, for when all is said the croak of the falcon is not so sweet a note."

The moon rose high and higher; and the nuns slept undisturbed — all but one, who rose towards midnight when the nightingales were holding full chorus, enthroned on every tree, rose softly and went to her window, watching the loveliness of the sky and the world beneath it. But her own thoughts were busy and she heard not — or if she heard, regarded but as the stirring of the breeze — the voice of Trillon telling of the far-away lands he had seen, and of the perils he had risked and escaped, before he came home again to his love. Sister Marto turned away from the flower-scented moonlight, and knelt before the shadow in which hung her crucifix, praying — praying —

Once only, a pleasant sound outside made her lift a startled face. It sounded like a soft peal of girlish laughter and reminded her vaguely of Madaleno. It was how the girl would laugh, if ever she laughed. The poor child! To-day they had been cruel to her — reluctantly cruel, at the bidding of justice, personified in their Mother; they

THE FALCON AND THE NIGHTINGALES

had let her wander supperless in the dusky garden; and when she came in, they had withdrawn from the possible chance of meeting her and speaking a word of comfort to her sore little heart; and they had locked her in with her trouble . . .

She half rose from her knees, this good Sister Marto, with the thought of tempering justice with mercy — just a peep in upon the poor little novice — to see that she had not cried herself into a fever; but she remembered, with a sigh, that the key of Madaleno's cell would be hanging in the bunch attached to the Mother's girdle, remembered and sank back to her praying. But she added one little orison not in the chaplet:

"O Mary, flower of women, let not her miss the greatest joy of this life, if it be thy will. Amen."

And who shall say that this humble incantation did not speed Trillon in the working of his miracles?

CHAPTER XV

TRILLON GROWS RICH

I AM afraid to say whether or not the morning star had risen by the time that Trillon had departed the way he came — the balcony, the plane-tree, a knotted rope, a breach in the broken glass that topped the wall — do not ask how it came there — and the arms of an almond-tree, growing high on a mound above the road. With a sudden whoop, which he may have learned among the Indians of the wild parts where he had been, he settled into a steady tramp towards — could you guess? — Avignon, the world of sausage-shops that he had once thought to have quitted forever. And as he went, one could not have supposed that he bore upon his head and sturdy shoulders, the weight of a miraculous achievement, to be wrought within a few weeks, for he sang in concert and in rivalry with all the hedge-birds that he met. And even when the mistral, in sharp descent from the Alps, powdered his mouth and throat with white dust, he but gaped and swallowed several times and was as fresh as ever. His thirst he quenched at wayside fountains, but when he had hunger he stopped at a village shop for a sou's worth of

TRILLON GROWS RICH

bread — from which it is clearly to be inferred that he was not altogether penniless.

Arrived at Avignon no less jauntily than he had begun the day's journey, he marched under the long line of plane-trees round the ramparts until he came to the quarter of the sausage-shop, where he found the former belle of Arles, exactly as he had presaged all the way, by her window before the counter that her scrubbing had rendered as spotless as a bed of snow, slicing off two sous' worth of a fat roll of pork for an urchin in a belted black smock.

"Hey, aunt," says he, cocking his hat in a way that must have been familiar to her from years back.

"Saints!" cries the poor old lady, and goes on cutting and cutting and cutting, until the urchin's eyes grew wide with wonder at the value he was to get for his money.

"You have a word of welcome for a dutiful nephew?" he asked politely; but still dumb, she went on cutting sausages.

"*Hoi*, then, if no welcome, you have at least sausage," — he helped himself so bountifully from her cutting that the urchin had no more than his proper share after all.

"It is good, your sausage, aunt," quoth Trillon, finding and drawing forth an extra chair from behind the counter. "I remember it very well. It was always the sort I liked best. And do you still buy your pig in the Place Pie, and how much do you give for it? Excuse me, I have waked and walked a night and two days; and I am hungry" — he helped himself to more. "Ah, it's no bad thing you make out of this shop, aunt. Lucky for you, my father had a

THE GOLDEN HAWK

prodigal son — *hein?* How much do you make a year? And how much goes to fatten your priest's pocket — *hein?* Oh, no need to look at me that way. Yes, yes, I am poor. I grant it freely — as poor as my priest should be, if I had one. I grant that freely. I am poor, but not ashamed of it. I am poor; but I have had adventures, aunt — adventures enough to have whitened the hair of any other man. And there is work before me to be done quickly. I cannot go walking about the country in a pair of dusty sandals. I must return like a prince."

"Return where?" asked the poor woman, with a gleam of hope, as she despatched the urchin about his business.

"Return whence I came," said he; and in the reaction from her fear and amazement, she began to wipe the tears from the corner of each eye alternately.

"But to return like a prince — *pecaire!* that needs money; and indeed, I have promised my sweetheart a handful. Therefore" — he concluded simply — "I come to you."

"Go to the bare rocks for water" — she wrung her hands.

"A spring could be found — an unfailing source — by one who could work the miracle," he hinted; but added openly: "My aunt, I could do with a little wine."

Awaiting no answer, he passed through the small dining-room behind the shop to the kitchen, rummaged the dresser and the cupboards and returned empty-handed, remembering then that in his father's time the keys would be safe in her apron pocket, but now that she lived alone — *tron de l'èr!* — who would have thought —?

TRILLON GROWS RICH

There was a shadow on his face when he came back — a shadow that she rather dreaded. Perhaps on the whole it was best not to anger him.

"Wait," said she amiably, "there is not much doing now. You shall have wine and a little déjeuner. After all, we are blood-relations."

His face cleared: "Hah! the fatted calf — is it so?"

He waited patiently while she clattered pots and saucepans in the kitchen; but he made a quiet round of the shop, took good note of all the changes since his father's time, and drew his own conclusions.

When the déjeuner came it was not unworthy of his acceptance. He had had his sausages, you see, and enough, as she undoubtedly judged; but she brought in ripe olives, which he always preferred to the green, and bread and butter; and afterwards a little omelette and a bottle of *Château-neuf-au-Pape*, some haricot salad, a treasure of a steak under a moi-~~ty~~ of chip potatoes, a little Roquefort and a handful of dates.

"Already I feel like a prince," he assured her, as he dropped the last stone on the dish, and leaned back replete. Of that small luncheon not enough was left to have gorged a fly. What especially troubled the frugal soul of the old body was the patent fact that she must go forth again and purchase for her own eating. Her nephew had always been an Artaban in working his way through food.

However, like the pious woman she was, she awaited his pleasure meekly, only setting forth her knitting in order to waste no time.

"My good aunt," said he, with condescension, "you sit

THE GOLDEN HAWK

very snug in my place; and as for myself I shall not trouble to turn you out . . ."

"Trouble, indeed?" cried she, and dropped her work, grown suddenly all red and shrill.

"I shall not," he repeated calmly.

"Blessed Virgin! When my poor departed brother — the Saints repose his soul! — left me every sou that he had in the world except five hundred francs that he threw away upon a rascally, ungrateful —" he pattered away more rapidly than at her *avés*.

"Quite so" — he nodded gravely. "But I want some money now."

"You have no right —"

"I waive it."

"You have none!"

"Quite so. You speak truly. I waive it. But I want some money. And I will have it." He spoke with gentle good-humour. "But I don't wish to resort to extreme measures."

"Measures?" she shrieked. "What measures?"

He shrugged.

"Measures? You cannot turn me out?"

"Did I say I would, dear aunt? Leave the measures to my discretion. But I want some money."

She wept again and whined: "And to whom in the world but my nephew, for all his faults, should I leave the little that I have?"

"To your priest, of course; and to him you will leave it, I have no doubt. But what I want, I want now — this morning" — his good-humour matched his patience.

TRILLON GROWS RICH

"Merciful —— do you suppose me rich?"

"So-so — so-so" — he wagged his head from side to side.

"You're a pretty ragamuffin to come ——"

"I know it, aunt. It is time all that should be changed. As I said before, I must return like a prince."

She wrung her hands in her apron: "What with the taxes and the falling off of trade, and competition, and inspection — it's scarcely a bone I can save for the soup-pot."

"I want a thousand francs," was his answer.

Her mouth opened, but no sound came.

"Yes" — he continued meditatively — "I think a thousand will serve my purpose. Or twelve hundred? It might be safer. But no, I'll take the chance — for the sake of the chance. A thousand and a pair of hands and three weeks — or more — hah!"

A fear crossed her mind that he was mad; and whence should she summon help? Perhaps he divined her thought, for he rose suddenly and blocked the doorway: "Come, come, aunt, we waste time; and I have none to spare. Your good déjeuner, while it made a man of me, yet devoured a portion of my time too; I must be off by the Marseilles express."

She pricked her ears. Marseilles? Here then was a faint hope that he might be going far? She sighed heavily, and unlocked the drawer that contained her money-bag. It chinked with silver as she laid it on the tray before her; and reaching in she drew forth a handful of coin, which she counted before him until she reached

THE GOLDEN HAWK

the sum of fifteen francs, after which she put back what remained in her hand.

"It pinches me — pinches me," she moaned, "but for your father's sake —"

He made no move to take up the coins. "It is a good beginning," said he, "and now the gold."

"Gold? Gold?" — she clutched her bag in extremity of terror. "I have no gold here."

"To be sure not — being a woman of sense. But you have it elsewhere, locked safely away. Fetch it, or I shall miss my train. And I tell you in a word, my aunt, that I shall not go away without it."

There was something threatening about his bulk; and the gendarmerie was far away; and no neighbour was to be seen. He had been abroad and come back with foreign ways — and he had been a devil of a boy . . . He might kill her and make away with the whole — before anyone came — that would be worse — no gold — no life. . . . Better less gold, with life to enjoy it. She reached into her bag and drew out a small purse, which she opened . . .

Somehow it was in his hands. He counted out the contents: one, two, three louis, two ten-franc pieces — and ranged them with the silver.

"It's for the shop," she moaned.

"I know. Change for a hundred-franc note," he said briskly. "But time fails. My total now is ninety-five francs; I lack nine hundred and five."

"But I have not got them!" she wailed, spreading out her palms, with such energy of voice and figure, that he was forced to believe her.

TRILLON GROWS RICH

"Ah, so? Not in the house. You have banked it all — the rents, the profits from the gardens — added it to the little sum that was there a year ago — *hein?*"

She pleaded for grace: "Trillon, I am an old woman; I shall die soon."

Her hypocrisy angered him and settled her fate. He became very short. "Your cheque-book," says he, and she dared not hesitate or whimper. "Now — write — my name — so-so —" He had found the pen and even guided a little the shaking fingers that threatened a blot with every letter. "So-so — and now — nine-hundred — francs; and the number — so: fr. 900. Steady — steady — or your name will look like the crawl of a fly half drowned in ink."

When the operation was finished, he pressed the blotting paper across the cheque and carefully detached it from the book. Then he became magnanimous.

"You see, I let you off the five francs, my aunt. Rebate, for cash — hah! No, I won't take it out of the money-bag, although I might and more — by stretching out my hand —"

"Robbery! robbery!" she gasped weakly.

"*Chut!*" — he cowed her into a mere trembling heap of fear. "If you talk of robbery, you know this is mine by right, and all that remains in the bank, on which you won't starve for a hundred years or so. You know it would have been mine if you had not filled my father's ears with evil tales. True? You know how many of them were true. You slandered me to the poor old man, and that's why your priest's pockets are so fat. You

THE GOLDEN HAWK

think to save your soul so? That is why you come out with your déjeuner and all? But I don't want the rest of the money; keep it and my blessing." He opened the door. "I don't think it's at all likely — it is not at all likely — that I shall return — still, no promise, mind. Better no promises. One never knows. But I'll leave you in peace, if I can. Adieu, my aunt, and many thanks."

The poor old creature sobbed audibly, how far with compunction, and how far at the loss of her treasure, it is best not to inquire. But she touched the heart of Trillon, and he returned.

"Look here, old woman," said he. "What's the good of going on like that over your rubbishy francs? Come, now, I've let you off a few; I'll do more. Here's your gold again. I'll keep the silver and the cheque and make it do." *Cr — link — link* — he flung on the table the three louis and the two ten-franc pieces. "Here's eighty francs — a clean gift to cheer your heart. God be with you!"

He got away quickly, feeling that the whole success of his enterprise hung in the balance; a few moments more and he would have returned the cheque with the silver, and had his walk and his déjeuner for his pains.

As soon as his shadow had ceased to darken the shop, she was minded to shriek for help; but when she spied the gold on the table, in her blurred mind it seemed to her that the loss had been made good. Then she looked at her open cheque-book and got up to run after the thief; but memories came and laid a finger on her lips. She sat down and wept with helpless rage; and so she was found by a neighbour coming in to buy a Lorraine cheese.

TRILLON GROWS RICH

Trillon went straight to the bank and took eight hundred francs in notes and a hundred in gold, folded and tucked them away, and stepped out briskly to the station. "After all," said he, "a simpleton could be rich, if he had no conscience. So far I have kept my word. A handful of money for my Leleto? Two handfuls, if it were all in gold; in silver, a lapful. Courage then! Forward! We are on the way."

CHAPTER XVI

THE SECOND RETURN OF TRILLON

THE advent of Trillon "up-there" in the guise of prince, has become a matter of history. To be sure, it entailed delay at Arles, for the purpose of rehabilitation, and he deplored the loss of every moment, in the urgency of the task before him. On the other hand, he felt the necessity of making a good impression, on the occasion of what might perhaps be called his state entry; and when he was equipped, no unprejudiced mind would have been able to say that the result did not justify the pains.

The choice of a costume was difficult. His own taste inclined him to velveteen or corduroy, although he wavered between white and a brown much darker than his earlier golden array. The tailor, however, told him that he was worthy of better things. One who had travelled so widely must look farther than his native land, etc., etc. He advised an English check, in yellowish brown, with a thread of green, the latest thing in Paris; and, indeed, after some contemplation, Trillon was unable to resist the seduction of the colour of his own curling hair-tufts. Inasmuch, the tailor continued, as one rarely met with

THE SECOND RETURN OF TRILLON

travelled men in Arles, he would let him have the clothes, including a proper green waistcoat, for a mere consideration. He advised tan boots and gloves, a green tie, and on the whole — yes, on the whole — a white straw hat with a green band. "Then," he summed up, "all the world will take you for a prince, travelling incognito as an English lord."

And Trillon was rather pleased at the fancy.

The only thing that troubled the tailor was the absence of suitable gold-work; no prince ever dressed so plainly. If monsieur would permit him to recommend an expert in all such matters of taste, a few doors down the street, and an honest man, being his own brother. . . . Ah, if monsieur would but permit him to show the way . . . ?

In the end Trillon found himself the richer by an amber scarf-pin, a silver watch with a gold chain from which dangled several seals of chaste design, and a curious ring set with a mottled stone which would bring luck, according to the tailor's brother, and which certainly gave a princely impression. He was the poorer by some rolls of bills; but then, as the honest jeweller said jestingly: "If you wear your bank-notes, you always know where they are." As Trillon at once perceived, this is perfectly true.

Half baptized in royalty, he did not shrink from the whole immersion. He proceeded to the Place of the Forum and walked round it three times selecting the smartest cab there. It had red wheels and a canopy with red fringe and tassels; and the coachman wore a red sash, a red band on his hat, and fluttered a red ribbon

THE GOLDEN HAWK

from his whip. There was something so ineffably royal about the whole equipage that Trillon was bent upon having it, although he had to bargain long to obtain a compromise in the way of terms. He minded this the less as it betokened in a measure the effect of his princeliness.

It would be difficult, impossible, I fancy, to do justice to the success, from a popular point of view, of the expedition, the following day. The monks of Montmajour had perhaps never looked upon anything more magnificent of its kind; the quarrymen of Fontvieille stopped alike their songs and their sawing; the women of Paradou, ranged along the bench of the station to gather up all the news of the world, had matter for a week's gossip. It is enough to say that he arrived. His horses clambered up the steep slope with but one broken knee among their eight legs — the Roman cobbles are sharp-edged still.

He arrived. The driver, fully convinced in his own mind of the lordliness of his charge, made such a flourish with his whip as to bring most of the heads of the village to their several doors and windows, Jousè and Emilio came out of the inn, beaming with visions of an entertainment that would run to many francs in their pockets.

Trillon smiled broadly when he perceived the impression he was making; and the smile changed to his characteristic "Hah!" when he saw the slow dawn of recognition in the glance they exchanged as he descended. He thought it best to take the dilemma by both horns at once. "A bottle of *Mercier*," said he grandly, "and three glasses. We drink together. And — give the driver what he likes."

THE SECOND RETURN OF TRILLON

Champagne so early in the morning? Husband and wife exchanged a second glance and a third. But Jousè followed the yellow-checked back through the room to the terrace; and the woman went to fetch the bottle and wipe the glasses.

In order that there might be from the first a clear understanding of his changed position, Trillon smacked upon the table a gold coin; and in extracting this, scattered a shower of coppers with one or two silver pieces among them on the tousled heads of the heirs of the house.

Wide-eyed, Emilio set down the bottle and retreated a little way, wiping her hands on her apron; Jousè bent to the cork and succeeded in eliciting a proper fizz.

But he was in doubt how to proceed. It was Trillon who snatched the flask and poured, at the same time beckoning the woman: "Health, and bury the past!"

Perhaps Jousè did not hear the entire sentence, perhaps champagne was too rare and over-tempting. The three glasses touched, and there followed a short silence of appreciation.

"Well," said Trillon at last, "do you find me a prettier fellow than you did three days ago?"

Jousè did not know what to say, so wisely kept silence.

"You do not ask me, have I seen your sister? I have. You do not ask, are we still betrothed? You may guess the answer. Although the silver ring was cut away from her finger, she managed to get the pieces, and wears them now about her neck. Do you ask, am I rich? Behold. In three weeks or four we shall be married."

"It is necessary to call the banns first," said Jousè, in

THE GOLDEN HAWK

his slow way, with a smile that showed all the whiteness of his teeth under his dark moustache.

"Ah, so," Trillon granted with a smile, "and I have a few things to do before then. I must be about them, *hein?*"

"You know, I suppose, something of the situation?" asked Jôusè.

"Hah!" Trillon threw back his head and stroked his chin. "A little, my brother, a little. But, look you now. I leave you the rest of the drink; I must have my wits about me this morning. I have business to perform. Come then, there's a thing I ask of each of you. Of madame, to do her best in the way of a *déjeuner*; and of you, whom in all confidence I call my brother, to get your priest, your Father what's-his-name? here without delay, as my guest — *hein?* I pay — I pay." And from the jingle of his pockets there was no doubt that he could.

Jôusè scratched his head in some perplexity, but when he looked at his wife for counsel, she gave him two vigorous nods that put strength into his resolve. With Emillo, family sentiment weighed less than *louis d'or*; and a brother-in-law who could break into a convent and make a fortune within three days might prove no small acquisition. If, indeed, he had broken into the convent. . . . one need not believe the word of every passer-by. But the gold clinked for itself; and the clothes and the jewels and the carriage cried aloud. At least, one might be friendly until one could find out how this devil-of-a-fellow intended to proceed.

Said Jôusè: "And if he will not come?"

THE SECOND RETURN OF TRILLON

Trillon pulled out his watch — whereupon his relations-to-be, viewed in the light of his hope and his purpose, exchanged another glance; and Emillo's expression became still more friendly.

"That's your affair," said he. "Do as you please about telling him who it is. Say it's a prince incognito, or an English lord, if you like; tell him what's for dinner; tell him the truth. It's all one to me. Get him here, and arrange what you can in the way of a déjeuner at short notice; and you shall not repent. Meanwhile, I must be about my affairs."

He strolled to the door of the room, easily, grandly, his hands thrust deep in his pockets, his seals clinking lightly against one another, his hat pushed well on the back of his head, leaving Jòusè and Emillo still rather stupefied by the presence of so much splendour. At the door, he faced about:

"By the way," says he, "do you happen to know of any land for sale?"

"Land?" Jòusè rubbed his eyes.

"A farm, for example, or a quarry? Or to let? But in the end, it might be cheaper to buy. However, we shall see. There is a special place I have in mind; I'll have a look at it."

Without further explanation he turned to go.

Said Emillo: "There's plenty of waste land. You might buy up whole mountains; but what you would do when you had them —?"

He grinned at her, "That is my little secret," and so departed.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"Emillo," said Jôusè, solemnly, pouring himself a second glass of champagne. "There is only one explanation for it — he is as mad as Judas when he hanged himself!"

"Mad or not mad," says she, with energy, "he shall have his déjeuner, and you shall fetch Father Gougoulin, and then, as he himself says, we shall see. Mad he is undoubtedly, to make such a fuss about a huzzy who is much better off where she is. But Saints preserve us, somehow — in three days — he has made a miracle of himself! And what more is it that you want?"

CHAPTER XVII

WHAT MAY BE DONE AT A DÉJEUNER

THE dining-room of the *Cabro d'Or* is finely vaulted and has a great Renaissance chimney. Undoubtedly, it was once painted with exuberance and set out with flamboyant stone figures by some rich merchant, in the days of King Francis. But when Emilio went there to live she blocked in the fireplace with pasteboard, covered the walls with a gay crimson wall-paper; and from the ribs of the ceiling she swung festoons and globes and lanterns of pink and yellow tissue paper. The stone figures had long since been banished to the garden; and the one relic of the ancient dignity of the room is the great *Capoun-Fèr*, the tawny falcon shot afar in the mountains by some ancestor of Mère Borel.

In this room, Emilio set forth such entertainment as she was able to provide for the two guests.

How procured, by what subtlety of wit or mellifluity of speech, I cannot say; but the presence of Father Gougoulin occupied the most comfortable chair when Trillon entered, with a look of serene accomplishment on his face.

They exchanged courtesies, Father Gougoulin lifting a

THE GOLDEN HAWK

negligent finger to his cap, and Trillon bowing deeply. In sheer exuberance of — what shall I say? grace? good-feeling? politeness? — he bent three times, laid his hat on the table, and sat down opposite the radishes.

The priest turned a keen scrutiny upon him, but left him the opening speech, the first thrust.

Perceiving this, he cast a genial eye over the hors-d'œuvres. "Olives, anchovies, sardines, two kinds of sausage and radishes," said he amiably. "Will it pass, monsieur l'abbé?"

Father Gougoulin made a gesture to indicate his supreme indifference to all matters of food.

"Well, then, unless I mistake, I am hungry. What say you — shall we begin?"

He pushed the dishes into a little ring of ceremony before the sacerdotal plate; and began a lively attack upon the bread.

Father Gougoulin stretched out a languid hand towards the anchovies. Olives, radishes, sausages — they were daily fare.

The two began in silence, Trillon showing a good appetite bestowed generously upon each dish in turn. He seemed in no hurry to reach the point; and Father Gougoulin maintained a thoughtful silence.

Emilio appeared with three plates nicely balanced: snails, their horned brown heads just peeping out of their shells, and salt fish, with a rich confection of garlic and oil and vinegar called *aidli*.

"No mountain trout here, monsieur l'abbé," said Trillon cheerfully. "But what would you? If one wants

WHAT MAY BE DONE AT A DEJEUNER

fish, one gets it, fresh or salted. And in the end it is fish. But do you prefer the snails?"

It was Father Gougoulin who first found the silence awkward.

"To what do I owe the honour of this invitation?" he asked abruptly.

"The honour, monsieur l'abbé, is entirely mine; but you owe the invitation, such as it is, to my desire that there shall be no misunderstanding between us. What I do, I do openly. And so I begin by assuring you that I have just come from a visit to the convent of Sant Alari, where I have talked with the lady who is to be my wife in three weeks or a month."

"Madaleno?" asked the priest calmly, although the snail shells rattled under his fingers.

Emilio entered with a steaming dish of rabbit and mushrooms, for which she knew his Reverence had a special love. It seemed that Trillon guessed this also, for he ladled generously and then pushed over the wine.

"You know, of course," said Father Gougoulin, munching with delicacy, "that she has a vocation?"

"No doubt. But it is not apparent," was the tranquil reply.

"And how are we to get over that?"

Trillon's eyes gleamed at the *we*; but he dropped them upon his wine-glass. No victory is won by over-confidence.

"I understand, monsieur l'abbé, that your objection is the chief bar to her marriage with — anyone she likes?"

"An objection," was the modest answer, "based entirely on the wishes of the deceased."

THE GOLDEN HAWK

Trillon showed in every possible way that he was fully prepared to accept this as the truth.

"Well, then," he asked naively, "am I to go a mourning bachelor all my days?"

The question was so unexpected that the priest stopped in the middle of a shrug and laughed; and Trillon laughed with him. "But, choose again," was Father Gougoulin's only remark.

"So I may, and so I may not," answered Trillon, with sudden vigour, "but at present this affair amuses me."

"The curse of the dead is not amusing," answered the priest.

"Not at all, but the avoidance of it may be — do you see?"

Father Gougoulin bent over his mushrooms, for the asparagus was arriving, and he wished more rabbit before the plates were removed. When his attention was only half held by the asparagus, for which he had no special liking, Trillon went at him again.

"And so, my father, your consent is impossible to be obtained?"

"Am I to trifle with the salvation or damnation of a soul?" asked the priest, following a tender shoot of asparagus all the way up to his fingers.

"Myself, I am not religious," said Trillon, and then as if some one had contradicted him, he repeated: "I am *not* religious. I get what I want in this world and let the other go."

"Then you are of the army of the devil," said the priest composedly, with half an eye to see whether by any

WHAT MAY BE DONE AT A DEJEUNER

luck the pièce de résistance was young lamb with green peas.

"That may be. I notice the devil generally gets his way in this world . . ."

Father Gougoulin looked a little startled — vexed too, because the lamb and green peas proved to be mutton and spinach.

"I fail to understand monsieur."

"No? Then I make myself clear. The point is, I shall have Madeloun by fair means or other, because at present it is my fancy to have her. Now the question of your consent is nothing to me. I defer to the foolish prejudice of women who play with sentiments as bulls with red rags until they grow mad . . ."

The priest gave no answer, making the best of the mutton and hoping for fowl.

"So, to keep her from lying awake nights, I shall humour her by fulfilling her mother's conditions, you see; and to this end your consent is necessary."

The priest chuckled, for, after all, it was fowl, and succulent.

"Come, now," says Trillon, "find me the thing to do that I cannot do; and if I make good, give her up like a man."

"You're a boastful blackguard!" said Father Gougoulin, with an eye on the lookout for salad.

"Try me — try me," says Trillon eagerly.

But the priest was intent upon oil and vinegar, for the perfect adjustment of the dressing lay in his hands.

"If it is only a question of money" — Trillon flung a handful of notes and gold on the table.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

Father Gougoulin mixed the salad, with a look of immense consideration. Trillon began to suspect that his expensive choice of wines was not wasted after all. A hard head the priest had shown, but his gravity was becoming preternatural.

"Her family would be glad to have her off their hands," said Trillon, advancing the latest bottle.

"She is off their hands," said Father Gougoulin a little silyly; but he made sad work of chewing down a lettuce leaf. "She is safe in the arms of the Church."

Trillon grinned and — I am afraid to say — winked. "Then let the Church hold her fast," he said.

But it is doubtful whether Father Gougoulin heard. He suddenly waved one wing and half the breast of the fowl in air, and broke into song:

"When the little hedge-king on the broom
Sings his love-longing —"

Trillon watched with his changeful yellow eyes, and awaited the moment which should prove auspicious.

"And so, good monsieur l'abbé, I take your consent for granted."

"*Wah!*" said the priest rudely.

"No?" asked Trillon.

Gougoulin looked at him a moment, with a return of intelligence: "I could tell you something — oh, yes, I could tell you something if I liked . . ."

"Well, then, tell," said Trillon soothingly.

But he took alarm: "This is not the time — I will tell at the proper time." It was far from clear how much

WHAT MAY BE DONE AT A DEJEUNER

truth lay under the pompous assertion. For a moment, Trillon was in despair how to handle this fat eel. He pondered a little, remembering various things that Made-loun had said, then he had a flash and spoke: "At least, I take you at your word — you cannot go back on your own word."

"What I said I stand by now and forever," said the priest solemnly; but his face was vacant of any comprehension.

"*Hoi*, then!" — Trillon leaped to his feet. "It is but the working of a miracle or two; and we shall have Made-loun here. It will be a game."

"What? What?" The priest took fire and half rose to unsay his words; but his drowsiness was too great.

"Almonds?" says Trillon. "Raisins? Not even a little Roquefort? It's very green."

Father Gougoulin sank back on one end of the long bench — the bench on which Mistral has sung and Daudet has told stories.

"*Sarnipabiéunel*!" says Trillon, bringing down his fist, without stirring the drone that had begun from the sacerdotal nose. "It is a thing to be done!"

He shook his fist at the hoary, unreverend head before him: "Now, *Manjo-crestian*! And it will satisfy her. And it will be worthy of the hawk. *Caspitello*!"

He could not refrain from clapping the old man on the shoulder: "*Hoi*, monsieur l'abbé, I shall want your services yet!"

The words but half penetrated. "Is it a funeral?" mumbled the priest, without looking up.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

Then Trillon laughed so that Emilio peeped in to see what was wanted. "You will be needed on several other occasions before that time, I trust."

Seeing Emilio, he prepared to pay for his extravagance. He pushed towards her a gold piece, and took up the roll of bank-notes lying on the table . . . it was amazingly light . . . He reached into all his pockets and drew forth what he could find. Then he deliberately set one of his princely cigars a-going; and with a sudden idea, stuffed two more well into the priest's sash, so that he should find them when he arrived home. And after that, he set to work counting his money. He went over the process several times, with increasing slowness and method. The result was the same. When he reached the end, for a second his face was rather black. Surely a thousand francs made a little fortune? Yes, but when one lives like a prince . . . Well, what would you — *hein?*

CHAPTER XVIII

THE THIRD RETURN OF TRILLON

THE Place du Connétable de Montferrand is the heart of Castelar, being a small stone-paved polygon of uncertain shape, between the ruined mansion of the warrior who in his time defied the great Richelieu himself from these city walls, and the church of the Maries, Madeleine and Jacobé and Salomé, and her who is chief of them all, Our Lady. So closely do these two shoulder each other that the Rue des Sarrasins has to tunnel its way under one wing of the Hôtel, to get up into the town, And all the opposite side of this thirty-foot enclosure is the curving rampart, stone-work built on hewn rock, whence one can look down upon the Porte Murette, the chief gate in the city wall; and lower still, to the sandy terrace where travellers had to wait until judgment was passed upon them, in the old days of plague; onward and down along the green valley, over plain and marsh and mere to the line of the sea.

The Place is never empty. To be sure, one room of the great house of Montferrand has been roofed over to serve as Council Chamber, when the mayor is called up

THE GOLDEN HAWK

from the fields, and the officials lay aside their patois and put on their coats to wrestle with French; and of course when there are public notices, these are set up outside the wall, hence foregathering is natural. At election-time the tricolour sweeps the Place and fills it. At mail-time, the facteur comes here to the one letter-box in the town; and as there is no post-office, he is always followed by a trail of folk who wish to know what news he brings from the outer world, and what letters are sent away, and why. He has been known to have even a small handful at a time. More than this, there is the drawing power of the long white road that Madeloun had watched from her terrace, and the blue unexplored plains of the distance. Aside from the one highway, there is only the rough sheep-track that leads into the heart of the mountains, and the narrow path that climbs to the parched cemetery on the crest; and so folk are ever on the lookout to see what may come up to them from the world that they do not know. There are sometimes as many as a score leaning and looking and listening over the wall; and even when, as rarely happens, it is deserted of all humanity, it never lacks a dog or two sleeping in the sun. So strong is the spell of the Place that old Antouneto, who long ago lost all count of her years, and remembered only that she was named for a lovely and unfortunate queen of France — Tounieto, who has barely kept alive this long while, sucking in the sun at the doorway of her granddaughter's daughter-in-law, one day had a flicker of strength that moved her down the Rue des Sarrasins, and was remarked by many neighbours as she leaned against the ramparts

THE THIRD RETURN OF TRILLON

and mumbled to the distance. The last call of life to her came from the Place; and the next morning she died.

However few people intended to wear elbow holes in the stone wall, the morning of Trillon's third return to Castelar, the company was swelled to a sufficient crowd by the time that his cart made a distinguishable blot upon the distant road. For a time, question and conjecture flew about like mosquitoes, then some one made the brilliant suggestion that Jaquelin of Masblanc, one of the two acolytes of a Sunday and on familiar terms with Father Gougoulin, should run and borrow his field-glass.

When this had been passed about for some time in silence, it was determined that the approaching vehicle was no gypsy van as had been at first supposed, but an ordinary farm *charrette*, packed high with indistinguishable objects, fronted by a driver in blue and drawn by a white mule. One man even swore to the identity of the beast, saying that it came from a farmer he knew near Montmajour.

As the mule began the winding cobbled ascent of the Roman road, an extraordinary noise as of pans and pottery, iron and tin, together with the clucking of fowls, the *bee* of a sheep or two, and the sharp, swiftly-suppressed yelp of a dog apparently trotting underneath, was blended and borne on high.

Before any sensible meaning could be extracted out of this *ménage*, the driver looked up and perceived the row of heads over the wall, whereupon he waved his broad-brimmed straw hat, laughed and shouted.

Jóusè suddenly stepped back as if he wished not to be seen:

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"*Tron-de-goi*, that spendthrift, that eat-when-he-gets-it, it's my brother-in-law to be!"

At this, casual interest was intensified to a breathless silence. The town remembered Trillon very well. Even the women left their water-carrying and their work, and came to peep wherever they could find space between the men's shoulders.

When the cavalcade arrived just below the Porte Murette, it was perceived that the *charrette* was covered with a great tarpaulin, under which in front appeared portions of furniture, chairs, a mattress, an oil stove, a table, a camp-bed . . . And the animals grew blatant as the wheels rattled over the stones . . . The women gained for themselves better points of view by their quicker wit and fertility in making out the various objects exposed to the gaze of the community.

Serene above the uproar sat the man in blue, singing, and his voice was strong:

"The rosemary all through the mountains,
Is drenched with the rain of my tears;
My sighs like wind stir the fountains
For thee, my love of long years,
Brown maid of the mountains."

As he was about to pass under the dark gateway, he interrupted himself and shouted: "Good day, my neighbours. I am come to live among you."

When he emerged on the other side, in the crooked alley that leads between the Hôtel and the ramparts to the Place, he found the community faced about, and the mayor in front, prepared with an answer — or a challenge.

THE THIRD RETURN OF TRILLON

He did not descend to earth at once, as was evidently expected — he judged by the clear space about the *charrette*; but continued sitting on his heap of boxes and sacks as on a throne, and cheerfully awaited the voice of Castelar. Said the mayor:

"Where do you come from?"

"Marseilles," says Trillon, "where I have been buying my farm. This is my household, my mule and my dog. My wife comes later. What next?"

"Your farm?" says the mayor slowly. "There have been no farms for sale at Castelar."

Trillon laughed: "Go to the prefect and teach him his business. He made the sale. But it would perhaps be more correct to say that I have brought my farm with me."

As if in confirmation of this remarkable statement, from the depths of the cart a cock crowed, as pompously as if already he stood on his own midden-heap.

There was a rustle of laughter and a swift buzz of talk in the crowd, almost instantly hushed at Trillon's fresh trumpet-note. "My *mas*," he repeated. "To be sure, my *mas*!" As if a farm could be loaded up by spadefuls and carried where one liked, was the public comment.

"*Pecaire!*" said a man's voice, "I think I'll pack mine into my *jardiniero* and move it to Marseilles, where is much more fun than scratching among the rocks here."

"No," said another, "it would be better to fetch Marseilles and set it on the top of Costa Pera yonder."

But Trillon hung up his reins, preparatory to descending, and said calmly: "I invite every man here who can get himself into the *Cabro d'Or* to drink with me — what

THE GOLDEN HAWK

he likes — to the success of my enterprise. It is the christening of my land."

"Your land?" says the mayor, in a voice of authority. "Yes, but where is your land?"

"Eh, well," answered Trillon, "you will soon know. It's chiefly in the Pit of Artaban."

At this a murmur of amazement passed through the crowd. There were some among the people who had always thought him mad.

But he gave them small chance for thinking. He got down briskly and turned to lead the way on foot to the inn, whither Jousè had long since departed. It was not possible to proceed further with his equipage, so he hung a nose-bag about the mule's head, spoke a word or two to Jaquelin, the acolyte; and stepped out briskly, followed by most of the men in a series of trickling groups, while the women lingered to appraise the cart and its contents.

He was a pure exaggeration of a Provençal farmer, this Trillon, in his baggy trousers and coat of blue jean, with his crimson sash, high-heeled boots and sombrero. With a high narrow *tambourin* he would have done for the variety stage at Marseilles.

They found Jousè, very neat and leisurely in his white linen, at a game of draughts with a traveller from Arles, who was above feeling interest in small local excitements. He had been botanizing among the mountains and was waiting for the chance of a lift home.

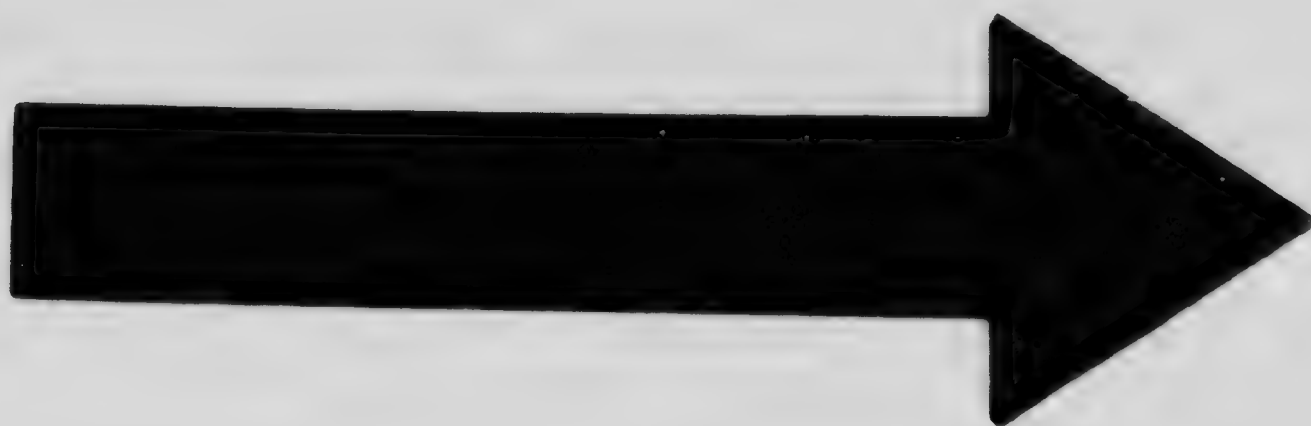
Jousè lifted his smooth handsome dark face, with its shining bald forehead and long drooping moustache, in frank amazement at the crowd blocking his screen-door.

THE THIRD RETURN OF TRILLON

This was neither Saturday nor Sunday, and he had looked for a quiet morning; but wherever that man Trillon was . . . However, he had no hesitation, no false pride, about serving the drinks, when he heard that his eccentric self-adopted relation was to pay for them. But he went first to Emillo in the kitchen, with a tremendous tale of this brother-in-law-to-be, who had come successively as a travelling musician, a beggar, and a lord incognito; and was now returning for the third time as a mere freak of a farmer. It was clear that he was mad — equally clear that he must be indulged.

The moment the café began to buzz and swarm, the host of the occasion hastily departed from before the indignant eyes of the mayor, who had condescended to sit at the same table with him. He had poured down his throat a large glass of lemonade, which he declared excellent to wash the dust from the lungs and tone the stomach; and before the corks of the others were popping and their glasses bubbling, he had thrown down two big silver pieces by way of payment — no longer gold, mark you — and was gone.

It is just possible that the whole performance was an expedient on his part to be rid of audience when taking possession of his farm. Certain it is, that his act worked to that effect; and when he had disposed of the urchins by mingled threats and a rain of coppers that set them a-scrambling and a-quarrelling, he went his way unpursued, save by the admiring glances of the women in the doorways — through the arch of the Rue des Sarrasins, through the town and out from the Porte Horloge to



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



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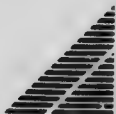
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THE GOLDEN HAWK

the extraordinary place that is known as the Pit of Artaban.

Meanwhile, he was discussed, together with the flavour of the drinks he had provided. Round and round the village minds chased one another, and came always to the same conclusion: "It is a madman — a fool!"

But small Jaquelin of Masblanc, the acolyte, who had some while since crept in through the screen-door and stood listening to the men, now showed a handful of sous, and voiced the general opinion as he said: "Even if he is mad, he must be very rich."

CHAPTER XIX

THE PIT OF ARTABAN

THE road between Castelar and the Pit of Artaban, after it emerges from the Porte Horloge, quickly becomes a mere alley between the olive-groves that climb the hill at the back of the village; and when it has drifted through a little narrow dale and proceeds to ascend the rocky slope opposite, it is simply a cut between crags, with a bed of shale washed down by the rain, a few tufts of thyme, spurs of gorse, and ridges of live rock.

It was no easy matter driving a farmyard and a crockery shop along this highway. Even the yellow dog in disgust gave up footing it and made a scramble to sit beside the blue driver. To her Trillon confided certain of his thoughts.

"Floureto," said he, "do you consider this a promising farm, or does it have at all the look of a quarry to you? I confess that to my mind it is rather like a big hole in the rocks. And this is the place we must make blossom like a rose. Eh, well, a man can never tell what he can do till he is put to it. But wait till you see the farmhouse, Flouro. You will be a surprised dog, little beast."

THE GOLDEN HAWK

And indeed, Flouro gave a wild yelp when the equipage came to rest on the lower hill, where it juts out into the plain, not unlike a sea-headland; and when she leaped down and had a look into the ruined windmill that confronted her there, she yelped more sharply than before.

"My friends," said Trillon to his household, "we are at home. Make the best of it."

He pushed back his hat, wiped the sweat from his forehead, and surveyed his land.

Flouro gave him a tragic glance; then uttered another yelp, and proceeded to nose out the prospects in the way of small game.

A more extraordinary spot for setting up a farm would not readily have occurred to the mind of man. The ground was thickly crusted with boulders, rocks of all sizes and shapes, ranged cheek by jowl, or sometimes in great heaps like gigantic petrified ants coming out of their hill. ("What the devil," says Trillon, "cannot boulders be moved?") Legend has it that when Jupiter warred with the Titans, he flung them down by pelting them with the pebbles of the Crau; and the Peak of Artaban skirts the Crau. Here the Titans must have made stout resistance, for between the great boulders small bits have been rained like hailstones, so that it is difficult to get a footing among them. ("What the devil," says Trillon, "cannot pebbles be taken away?" And in Marseilles the authorities had expressed themselves of his opinion.)

The larger rocks made the hilltop look like a nightmare frozen into stone. They were carved into great heads, with profiles half human, half beastly, into monsters

THE PIT OF ARTABAN

natural and supernatural — griffins, hippogriffs, sphinxes, unicorns, dragons, centaurs, chimeras — creatures imaginable and unimaginable, but always with a curious semblance of frozen life. It was no wonder that Fiouro howled three times and was destined to bay dismally many times more before she was done with the place. Wise men say that the sea, which once spread over all the plain below, has wrought these miracles in stonework; but to the folk of Castelar they wear the look of magic and are safest avoided by night.

The Pit of Artaban is a sudden hollow between the two levels of the hill, and contains a half-worked quarry abandoned ages ago. One side is a sheer-cut wall, rudely semicircular in shape, perhaps twenty metres high, and its uneven floor is more thickly covered with coarse herbage than is the surrounding hillside. The quarry itself forms a sort of ledge covered with rock and rubble, and wherever the wind has left a little dust, with clumps of gorse. From the lowest point to the top there is a scarcely definable track over boulders and between scrubs, winding up in small spirals and traversing the semicircle between the bottom and the crest. The windmill stood — stands yet — on the lower part of the promontory near the tip, where the mistral has a clean sweep; and immediately behind it is the bottom of the Pit, with only a short slope of four or five metres down, but seeming a considerable profundity from its top ledge, the quarry, when this has been reached by the rocky winding path.

Trillon was not blind to the magnificence of the scenery;

THE GOLDEN HAWK

but in the nearest corner of . mind he was thinking of the mule.

"Come, now," says he, "Balin, I don't suppose you're hungry; but you may as well take a rest in your new pasture and see what you can find to suit your digestion."

He freed the animal and drove him down the slope into the Pit, tying him with a long tether to a pinnacle of rock.

This accomplished, he proceeded to burrow in the depths of his cart, and presently drew thence a basketful of fowls packed for safety under a table, and three sheep tied securely between the legs of a folded camp-bed. These he tethered in a similar fashion in the Pit; but while he was surveying his livestock with due satisfaction, he was suddenly so overcome by hunger that every other thing in the world lost its immediate importance.

He managed to shelter his oil-stove from the mistral among the nettles that nearly filled the windmill, and unpacked a box of dishes and cooking utensils. The first food that he reached was a basket that with commendable foresight he had placed in an accessible position for this very meal, with bread and sausage and wine and eggs.

But these last were uncooked. He hunted out a saucepan, and then — then only — he first remembered that he had not inquired into the question of water on the land. This small detail had also been overlooked, perhaps cheerfully, by the authorities in Marseilles, who transferred it to him for a consideration of bank-notes.

"I may have to divert a water-course," said he, looking about for a solution to the immediate difficulty. In a

THE PIT OF ARTABAN

moment, he had one so simple, so ingenious, that it shows, more than almost any other single fact, the true magnitude and easy working of his mind. He poached the eggs in white wine. Did you ever taste them so? He assures me they are worthy of a gourmet.

"By all that is holy," says he, "it was a discovery in itself!"

Picture him then on the open cliff, eating in the shade of his roofless windmill, with his household browsing below in the Pit of Artaban.

With his second cup of wine, the present began to merge into the golden future. Stone monsters became olive-groves and almonds and mulberries; the ground instead of its crop of pebbles was covered with teazle and haricot beans, with here and there a vineyard. The plateau became rich pasture-land; and at the far end of it rose the farmhouse, with its stone-pillared porch, over-run with vine and fig, with its stone table and benches on which he sat with Madeloun, eating their own black olives and goat's cheese and figs, and drinking the wine from their own grapes . . .

For a man who, barring the time he was at sea, had scarcely done a day's labour in his life, it was a notable picture. But then, as he assured himself, he did not mean to do the work; he had only to set it in motion by such means as his wit should devise. And as for the house, it was half-built already, being cut out of the cliff by men who had lived at the beginning of the world. Three solid walls were there, hewn out of the rock. Only the front must be added of shaped quarry-stones. There are

THE GOLDEN HAWK

many such dwellings about Castelar — ruined houses older than the record of history, turned to good use by the builders of to-day.

It was pleasant enough smoking a pipe in the shade and shelter of one's mill, dreaming of the prettiest and sweetest little bird in the world, who was just waiting for her hawk to come and nip the cord that bound her to an unwilling perch . . . But the afternoon haze was creeping up from the sea. Soon the heat of the day would be supplanted by the chill of evening, and one could not sleep among nettles breast-high. Relentless necessity demanded a certain amount of clearance and unpacking; and all the beasts were waterless. I doubt whether even Trillon could tempt giving them white wine.

He awoke from his dream with a sigh . . . heaven is always so far away! Then he rose and stretched himself in the sun, with his face turned up as if the rays gave him strength. After that he went to work with a mighty impulse that sent the stones flying out of the windmill, cut nettles like paper and brushed them in thick masses into the open, frightening the yellow dog almost out of sight and earshot. In an amazingly short time he had his circular floor, perhaps fifteen feet in diameter, clear for his bed, stove, and various stores; and the great tarpaulin, acquired at some junk shop near the docks in Marseilles, he was ready to hoist into its position as roof. And if you would know how he did it, I can say only that he had a ladder and several planks lashed under his long-tailed cart; and that he mounted his ladder and dragged up his planks one by one, laying them in a sort of network

THE PIT OF ARTABAN

across the stones. Luckily for him the original roof had been torn off so as to leave a clean rim. Then with a good deal of painful labour he stretched his tarpaulin over this frame, and weighted it down at intervals with boulders as heavy as he could lift — an incidental beginning at clearing the land — until the windmill was topped by almost a cairn of stones. When he judged it safe, even from the mistral, the day was past sunset.

He sat down with a huge sigh of relief, so tired that he did not stir for above an hour, even to find himself bread and cheese, or to light a candle within his hut. But with the first bite, he remembered his hungry, thirsty animals. The yellow dog hung about his knee, refusing to eat, and openly panting her need of refreshment. Trillon laid down his food and sighed; then he laughed and fell a-whistling, as he jerked his weary bones into action, and hunted out two pails.

It was a long walk to the village. The night was moonless, and twice or thrice he lost his road and strayed among the olive alleys; and though the town was plain enough all the while above him, he could not, so encumbered, climb the sheer ascent where the trees stopped short, the yellow dog pattering at his heels, and not offering to act as guide. But the time that he reached the slope to the Porte Horloge, Castelar was black and silent, even the café. He walked softly in his sandals, for he had a feeling that this expedition was a bit ridiculous on the part of one who had his own land, and had set out to be a farmer.

He came to the town pump on one side of the Place, and began to work the handle.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

Càspi—it had a creak that would have stirred the Seven Sleepers! He felt a little pricking of sweat, while he wondered how it would seem to have shutters thrown open and citizens come running, laughing and swearing together when they discovered the cause of the disturbance.

But his luck held. Now it was Flouro who saved the situation. Perhaps her emotions had been gradually swelling until they boiled over. She sat down and flung back her head in such a keening as might have stirred her primeval mates from their dust. It was like the spirit of desolation wailing over the lost, somewhat in these notes, many times repeated:



A dog in the village took it up, and then another across the valley; and any one of the three would have drowned the pump. So Trillon filled his pails without discovery, the town being well-used to dogs, perhaps from the ancient day when it was an Arab settlement. He went home and refreshed his farmyard, setting aside enough for his breakfast and — O ye who revile Provence! — even a small portion for a morning wash.

Then, when he should have been star-gazing and dreaming of Madeloun, he went to bed and slept soundly.

CHAPTER XX

ALL FOR A CUP OF MILK

WHEN the dawn broke through his doorless doorway, he sat up and brushed the yellow tangle out of his eyes, wondering, for the moment, where he was. It was a matter of seconds to remember that he was in his own farmstead, on his own land, and had only to persuade the little Provençal world about him that what they had all their lives regarded as a quarry was in reality a *mas*.

He wasted no time wondering how he should go about this trifle. Hunger pressed, and his mind did not soar above or beyond breakfast.

He went outside on his headland, and stood with a brisk wind ruffling his feathery hair. The sea of plain at his feet was smoke-purple with heat. The day's work — if work was demanded of him — would be hot and hot enough.

He sheltered his oil-stove in a box, and set a little of his precious water on to boil. Then half-dressed and wholly disinclined for action of any sort, he strolled idly to the edge of his rock and looked down into the plain, wondering what Fortune would bring him that day. He wished

THE GOLDEN HAWK

it might be milk, hating black coffee so early in the day. To be sure, he could do without the object of his desire, whether it were milk or Madeloun; but he was not minded to be so deprived. He returned to the fire, got out his dishes, his bread, set his coffee a-steeping, and wandered to the opposite side of his territory where the country track winds along from the village. He thought something might turn up to his advantage.

Believe me or not, he had not been three minutes in the place, on a boulder some twenty feet high that overhung the mountain road, before he heard a tinkle that pealed in his heart as gaily as wedding-bells; for his keen glance spied, together with the sheep and the shepherd, a brown goat trailing in the rear of the little flock.

He had no knowledge that the slim youth who came last was that very Ramoun whose eyes had been wont to burn Madaleno's neck when he sat behind her in the church of a Sunday; but the shepherd had heard much talk in the village, the night before, and it was with no friendly eyes that he surveyed the well-balanced, square figure on the rock above him.

He gave no attention to the "Good day," that came down to him; but bent his head with sulky mouth and eyes, and prepared to pass on, mute.

Then the man with the tousled yellow hair made an extraordinary sound between a cackle and a crow — his attempt at the noise of the *Capoun-Fer* — which startled the passer-by into a halt and a backward glance.

"What language do you speak, then, if not that of the country?" complained Trillon. "I said good-day."

ALL FOR A CUP OF MILK

"I have no good-day for you," growled Ramoun. "You are no friend of mine."

"Bless you, boy, what would you? It is not a question of friendship, but of milk."

Ramoun looked about him, as if to gather from the landscape whether he could have heard aright.

"Yes," said Trillon serenely, and sat down on the turf that half covered the boulder, for his greater ease. "You are quite right. This is the *Mas* of Artaban; but the cows are not yet in working order."

"The Pit of —" began Ramoun.

But Trillon was firm: "The *Mas* of Artaban, I said. Come up and see the stock."

Clearly it was a madman, as some of the village had insisted; or a devil — Ramoun crossed himself to be on the safe side; and wished he were a little nearer the chapel of the Maries, that they might lend him of their virtue.

While he was so engaged, the head above disappeared and he moved slowly onward, remembering old legends of demons and apparitions; but he had not gone twenty paces before a white enamel cup came flying down in his path and set the hindmost sheep kicking, while the owner of the vessel surveyed him from the top of the bank, and called: "Fill it. You have a goat."

"*Tron de l'èr!*" stormed the shepherd, coming suddenly into his manhood. "Jump down and I'll show you!"

"Show me what?" asked Trillon, stretching out a leisurely leg, as if with some thought of descending.

Ramoun muttered, but was inarticulate through rage.

"What have I done to you?" asked Trillon calmly.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"Or, if you won't give me the milk, sell me the goat. I have need of one."

Ramoun made a sudden ineffectual dash up the bank; but slipped back again, stumbling and almost losing his balance.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Trillon again, and in two bounds or three was down the slope and facing the irate shepherd.

Out of a tangle of words, "Madaleno" alone was intelligible.

A light broke upon Trillon: "Come, now, I understand. We are rivals. But as she is safely locked up in a convent, I don't see why that should interfere with my cup of milk."

"I hate you — I hate you —" stuttered Ramoun, between his teeth.

"You are over-hasty, my friend," says Trillon. "It would be much more sensible to exchange a cup of milk for a cup of coffee at this early hour of the morn —"

His utterance was choked by the grip of Ramoun on his throat; and for a moment or two they had it back and forth very fiercely. Before either prevailed, Flouro came plunging down the slope after her master, and attacked the sheep-dog; and the double duel progressed merrily. while the sheep began to scatter like thistledown, some towards the plain and some towards the wild mountains.

Perceiving this, Ramoun ceased his aggression, and struggled to free himself, for it was Trillon now who had the advantage. But sense of the danger of his flock so wrought within the young shepherd that his wrench grew

ALL FOR A CUP OF MILK

desperate, he staggered back loose, barely saved himself from falling, called off his dog and ran.

Trillon looked after him a moment, picked up his cup and thrust it into his pocket, and retreated to the top of the bank to watch and wait.

Fortune favoured him so far as to send a brace of ewes pattering his way; and so startled were they, coming upon him unexpectedly at the top of the rock, that aided by the steepness of the slope and the unwieldiness of the beasts, he was able to clutch one under each arm, and with a mighty effort to hold it struggling there. But he prayed — or at least he swore — that Ramoun might return quickly.

If the shepherd was astonished before, at his first glimpse of the tousle-headed man, imagine his feelings upon returning with the collected bulk of his flock, ready to descend to the plains, upon perceiving this same mad individual hugging two of his biggest ewes.

But before he could protest, Trillon suddenly released them, heading them downwards so that they should quickly find the remainder of their family and seek the shelter of numbers. Then he rubbed his hands together and laughed at Ramoun: "I bear you no grudge; and I think I have earned a cup of goat's milk. What say you? And my offer of the coffee still holds good." He drew out his cup and looked at it pensively.

"Throw it down," says Ramoun, very red; and when he had satisfied himself that his dog alone could manage the flock, he captured the goat, drew it aside and began milking.

Trillon descended at his leisure and watched the process.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

When the cup foamed, Ramoun held it up until it was taken; then got to his feet and said emphatically: "I won't have the debt on my side. You may be a madman, but if you are up to any tricks with that girl, and get her out of the convent, as they say up in the village you mean to do, then you have me to reckon with, if you bring her to this place to live — that is all. And as for your coffee — I spit at it!"

It was a long speech for him to make, but it came to a sad conclusion, for the end of the sentence was drowned in a gush of foaming warm milk that whitened his dark hair, splashed his clothes, and washed his face as it had not been washed for many a day, even trickling in warm currents between his neck and his shirt-band.

Blinded, he made a forward dash, was whirled to the ground, and punished for his presumption.

"When you are ready," said Trillon between blows, "to milk me another — say." And in time Ramoun made a sign, though not in words, and was allowed to get up.

The liquid that rolled down his face was not milk, and he was sufficiently subdued to take the cup at Trillon's hands and proceed to its second filling.

When it was ready, he would have set it on the earth; but Trillon was peremptory, and he handed it up. He was amazed as he still stooped on the ground, perhaps too dizzy to rise, by the dropping of a franc on his hand.

"I pay for what I get," says Trillon. "Now, go tell the village what you please."

"It is enough for this time," answered Ramoun, with

ALL FOR A CUP OF MILK

a black glance, speaking thickly through cut and swollen lips, "but I do not forget. And I do not take your franc."

"So much the worse for you," quoth Trillon, picking up the coin from the earth.

He waited until the shepherd had gone a short distance, swabbing his face as best could be done with his coat-sleeve, then spun the bit of silver so that it flew like a pebble and landed in the small of the retreating back.

Ramoun turned, furious, looked at his persecutor, then at the coin, seemed to comprehend that the process might continue indefinitely, and pocketed the franc. "Very good," said he, "I take it so that I may remember."

"Do," says Trillon; and carefully balancing his dearly-purchased breakfast, he climbed up to the wind-mill, and ate with an excellent appetite.

CHAPTER XXI

SETTLING IN

It is not often that a farm may be evolved out of a quarry in a single day; still with youth, fertility, and a strong dramatic sense, one may do much.

Trillon's first act, after the memorable breakfast that had cost him so much time and trouble, was to sit down over a smoke and consult with Flouro as to the best means of beginning this curious metamorphosis.

"Floureto," says he, "we'll get out our papers and we'll mark off our land, and set up some sort of barrier, so that you will know when strangers overstep the mark, and treat them accordingly. Eh, then? Say yes."

And of course Flouro barked unqualified assent.

"Then we will send out a search party, composed of yourself, the mule and me, to find the nearest water, and to devise how it may be turned upon the estate — *hein?*"

Flouro offering no objection, he proceeded, "Further, we must clear the land of stones in time for the autumn sowing and planting, and we must arrange some sort of dwelling for the pretty maid that we shall steal out of her convent presently, and bring here — eh, what? You like

SETTLING IN

that, Floureto? And when we have married her by fair means or other, what then, old dog, what then? What will be left to do? With no curse, no fighting, nothing to stir up a man's liver, shall we have to sit down and smoke all day and grow old together, yellow dog? It sounds dull and dull enough, but perhaps there will be some little excitement by the way; and at the least, we need not look forward to the morrow. To-day has its own living."

He went within the windmill and brought forth the box containing his rights of land, purchased with considerable expense, notwithstanding a large bonus of derision, at the prefecture in Marseilles. Long he pondered over measures and boundaries, then carefully set away the documents, and taking a hoe proceeded to make the rounds of his estate. It was a primitive kind of surveying — even Flouro could not understand it, as she followed with discouraged tail all the ups and downs of her master.

I will not say that Trillon was over-accurate; when his hoe scratched the inner side of a boulder, this served very well as boundary line; when the rock was small, and there arose a question whether he should omit it or take it in, Trillon went round. If error there was, it was for Marseilles to correct it; but, indeed, the land was waste, and there was no soul in the world mad enough to look at it but himself.

Half he sighed, and half he chuckled, when his surveying took him to the edge of the cliff, and he could look down upon the fat lands of the plain with their olives and their vineyards and their almonds. It would take a little grubbing, he decided, to make his *mas* look like that; and

THE GOLDEN HAWK

all at once, moved by the spirit of experiment, he reached for a fair-sized boulder, as large as he could lift, and heaved it over the cliff, watching it descend leaping from point to point, until it splintered against the stone wall of the nearest olive-garden.

"One method of stone-breaking," he said, straightening his shoulders, "but to clear all one's land in that fashion—eh, well, I must find an easier way. Some boulders we might build up into boundary walls — *hein?* We shall see."

He continued his round up the hill-path that encircled the Pit, wherein his mule was nosing with an anxious expression such herbage as he could find, where the sheep looked discouraged, and where the fowls were scratching and comparing notes over the small pebbles and shards of ancient pottery that they could not identify; and down he came on the other side, where the descent was far too steep for comfort; and at last he could say that he had surveyed his scrag of property. How to measure it in acres I cannot tell; it was a chunk of mountain partly hollowed out into quarry.

But Trillon was not content until he had made the journey repeatedly with pick and spade, and had dug out a perceptible trench, marking it here and there with such big stones as lay near. By evening he had done the hardest day's work of his life, and while wondering whether he had strained his back for all time, he was pleased to note a perceptible scratch on the earth, and a succession of boulders that, studied with attention, might be taken to mark the outline of an estate. Any ordinary man, view-

SETTLING IN

ing the land within from the standpoint of farming, might have been discouraged, seeing it warted like a monstrous toad with all manner of rocks and stones, scrofulous with furze-bushes, aromatic with a scattered growth of utterly useless plants, powdered over with fine pebbles and minute fragments of ancient pottery, Arabic, Samian, Greek, prehistoric — all highly ornamental, when sifted and labelled in a museum, but a little out of place on a farm. I am afraid the practical man, upon surveying this field, would have cried out that it would be no more difficult to get a harvest from the sea. But Trillon sang as he worked, and whistled when he got out his bread and cheese, and was silent only while he ate and slept. Doubtless, he lacked the sense to be discouraged. I never claimed for him ordinary intelligence.

The only diversion that he allowed himself all that day was a short journey, immediately after his siesta, to find the nearest spring. He had wondered a little that none of the villagers had come to look on during the initiation of his work; and was indeed somewhat loth to return to Castelar at this stage for information in regard to water. His ignorance on this point, even to his own mind, implied a certain lack of foresight. However, he saw no help for it, and prepared to swallow his pride as gracefully and as cheerfully as might be. He slung two great water-cans upon his mule, and himself mounting, turned the beast along the rough mountain track.

But before he had proceeded very far beyond the end of his own promontory, Fortune was kind to him and sent him help in the way of a village girl returning from Mont-

THE GOLDEN HAWK

paon, where she had been on a visit, as he judged by the little pack she carried.

She looked at him with such wondering eyes that it was clear she knew nothing of his arrival. Her face seemed to him vaguely familiar; but he did not identify her with that very Jano-Mario who had been sewing with Madeloun on the first day of his coming. She, however, remembered him very well, but she could not, invoke the Saints as she would, account for his presence at Castelar, when poor Madeloun was many kilometres away in a convent . . .

"My pretty child," said he politely, with a bewildering sweep of the hat, "you would do me a great service if you would direct me to the nearest spring."

"But, monsieur," she objected, "it is twenty minutes away, up in the mountains yonder."

"Mademoiselle," said he, "if it were a thousand leagues, I must have water."

She stared at this mad speech; and before she had collected her wits, he resumed: "If you would but set me on the right way, I shall nose it out — never fear."

She pointed then, and gave one or two brief directions, and was overwhelmed by the vigour of his thanks.

"Monsieur," said she rather timidly, "was it not you who climbed over the wall —?"

At this he remembered her. "Yes, yes," said he, "and it's you who shall kick your heels at Madeloun's wedding not so many weeks hence. Bear that in mind. But first I must get water. *Adessias!*"

He left her to gape, and afterwards to carry up to the

SETTLING IN

village a report which confirmed the theory of his madness.

Meanwhile, he was on the trail of the spring, knee-deep among the sweet herbs of the mountain; and when he found the clear water and perceived how it turned straight towards the village itself, he knew that it must be the same that he had pumped in the night under cover of the barking of dogs. And he had a moment of bitter oaths, seeing himself thus diverted from his plans of aqueducts and irrigation. The water was well garnered, that was sure; and unless he could find another source . . .

On the homeward way, when he had come in sight of the *mas*-to-be and its treasures, left in the guardianship of Flouro, he had a brilliant idea: "Where there is a wind-mill, there must have been water. We have only to dig."

With this conclusion he was so well satisfied that, having disposed of some of his water where it was most needed, he worked with fresh heart all the afternoon, and when twilight came he was not ill-content. Too tired to cook, he got out a loaf and cheese and wine, and flung himself on the ground, resting on his two elbows, while he munched and drank and considered.

"I suppose the Trinquetailles spent their time wandering about and doing mad things while the Trillons were sticking their pigs and stuffing them into sausages. They built their castle up there where there's scarcely room for a crow to settle; I build my *mas* down here where no blade of grass grows. It's all the same. It's not what you do, but what you persuade other people that you do — that's the thing . . . There's the tale Pons tells about

THE GOLDEN HAWK

the three fellows who talked the countryman into believing that his new shoes were a pair of partridges. Well, Castelar is the countryman, and if my head isn't worth any other three in Avignon, then I'm altogether Trillon and not Trinquetaille. It shall be done; and then — then there's always the world to conquer, as those old chaps up there conquered all they could lay hands on . . . Every man has his chance once in a life . . . but it does not do to begin with a curse — not that. Eh, well, there's Madeloun, and then . . . ?”

He paused and looked across into the heavy gloom of the plains: “I wonder if any other man on earth would be so big a fool as me?”

He did not answer the question — perhaps the reply was too obvious.

But less to be taken for granted was his conclusion: “Nothing is impossible in this world, if a man once sets about it.”

CHAPTER XXII

THE CLEARING OF THE LAND

HE was awakened the next morning by a great fusilade of barks from Flouro; and coming forth from his den, shaggy, still flushed with sleep, he perceived a procession of dignitaries approaching along the track from Castelar.

A moment he stared, whistled, chuckled, and slapped his knee; then he throttled the yellow dog, dragged her back ignominiously and tied her up in a corner of the mill.

With his usual perspicacity, he had perceived the object of this delegation, and decided to turn it aside with friendliness. He brought into easy reach the few cups and other drinking vessels that he possessed, saw to it that he could lay hands on several bottles by no means empty, and proceeded to the preparation of his little breakfast, quite undisturbed.

When the first of the men from Castelar appeared above the bank by which the windmill was reached from the road, Trillon was nothing more than an amiable if surprised host. Quick as lightning, before a word was uttered on either side, he had looked them over and summed them up. They were only six or seven in num-

THE GOLDEN HAWK

ber, but they were headed by the mayor, a grizzled parchment farmer with no small sense of his importance.

And just as this personage opened his mouth to speak, Trillon was stung with an idea, and forestalled.

"Neighbours," said he, and his yellow eyes twinkled like leaping fires, "it is early in the morning for questions, but which of you would like a fat pullet?"

The mayor's mouth continued to open, but it was with the dropping of his jaw. You might also have heard the click of her jaws as the men of Castelar huddled together; you must remember, they thought they were dealing with a madman.

"I ask," he continued screnely, "because I have one here that with good luck shall be cooked by the wife of him who can win it."

He was not mad. I do assure you he had as clear a purpose as ever dominated him in his life, before or after; but even he himself was a little dismayed by the speed with which it had swooped and mastered him. He had not known a second before he spoke what he was going to say; and now that the idea was uttered, it was as clear as sunlight to him why he had spoken and what he meant to get. But he was more astonished than usual at his own cleverness.

"Look you," said he, visibly expanding, as he unfolded the scheme. "I tie my pullet by the leg to a boulder — so. You stand so far away — in a line, you see — and the man that brings her down has a good pot to-morrow."

I do not think the idea was his own. I believe it came from an old *Almanac*, or something of the sort, that he had

THE CLEARING OF THE LAND

read, years before, at Mercadou's among the violins; but the notion had lingered in his mind all this time, waiting a useful occasion. Whether anyone else ever tried it, I have no means of knowing.

But while the men of Castelar gaped and nudged one another, and the mayor stood in frozen dignity, he had leaped into his farmyard, once the Pit of Artaban, and captured a fluttering, squawking victim. When the mayor made another attempt at the business that had brought the party thither, he did not get beyond a "I have been asked in behalf of . . ."

Trillon interrupted gaily: "After, my friend, after. It's a question now of a pullet. Does not your mouth water? Look — I will tie her on a pinnacle of the rock, yonder on the point. You shall draw cuts for first chance, and we shall soon see who is best shot."

A second time the mayor would have spoken; but one of the younger men was already scratching a line through the rubble to the earth. It was clear that all the fingers itched to try. The mayor stepped aside, and the men threw themselves into the business with so much heart that it would have seemed to a passer-by that they had come for nothing else.

Now, mark you, the line that they were to toe was well within the boundaries of Trillon's estate; and the pullet was attached a long way without. Do you see? And the weapons? These were the small stones that would encumber Trillon's wheat from growing if ever he sowed wheat, or his teazles or his haricot beans. And more rapidly than you can read, the men of Castelar were

THE GOLDEN HAWK

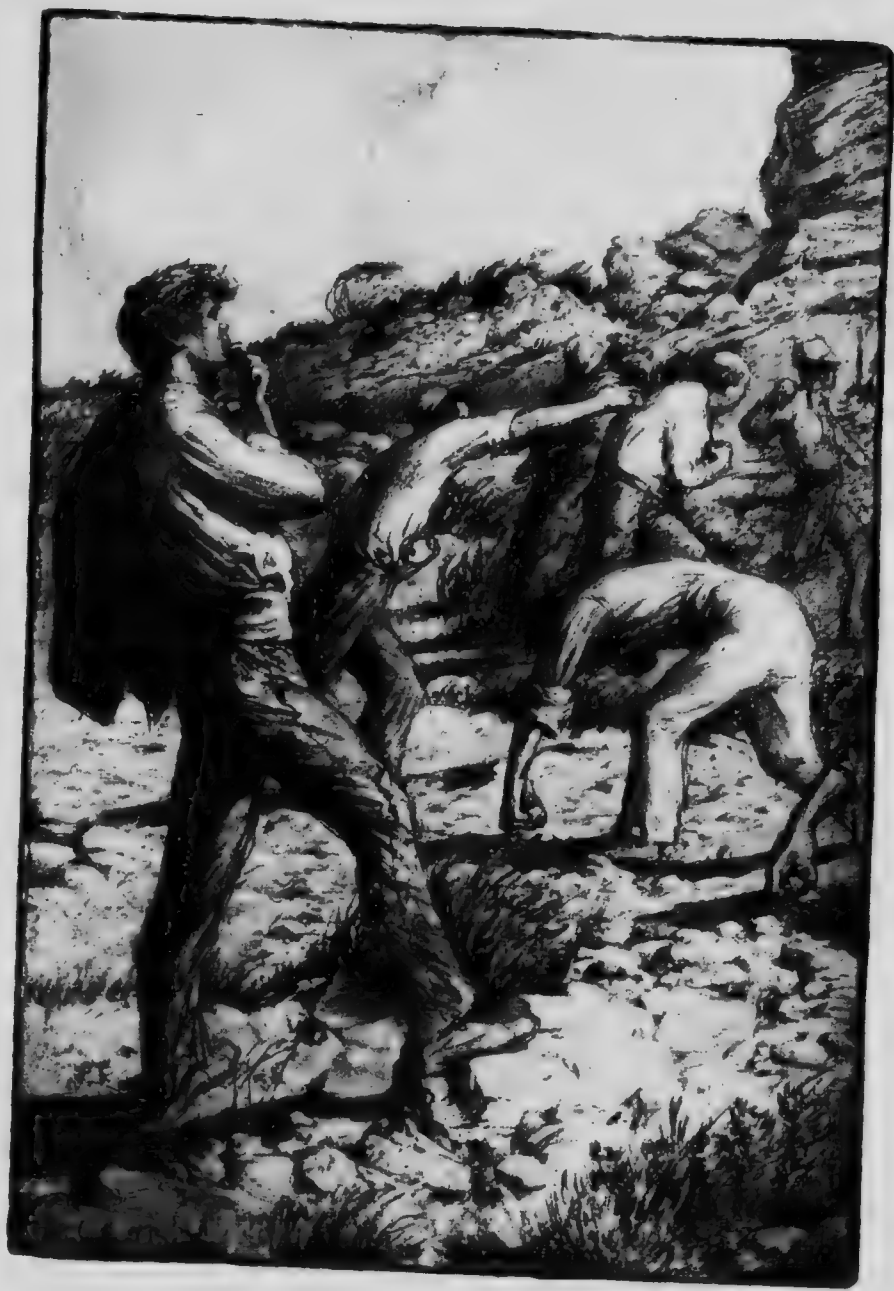
filling their pockets with pebbles useless for any purpose except perhaps to bring down pullets at a distance of so many metres.

One scarcely knew how the shooting began. But while public attention was concentrated on the prize, Trillon was mustering glasses and bottles, and preparing coffee for those whose taste was not for stronger drink so early in the morning.

I cannot tell you whether he had chosen his fowl with discretion, or whether his unfailing luck was to blame; but there never was a more nervous pullet born; and as the distance had been nicely judged, she fluttered about unscathed in a rain of small stones. One or two swore that the devil was in the bird, for she flew high as a man aimed low, and when he thought to bring her down, she was roosting on the boulder as if she had never moved. And there grew a widening bare spot about the feet of the unsuspecting Corporation.

It was martyrdom for the fowl. She would have had my profoundest sympathy, had I not known that a single pebble would have produced fully as much agitation in her sensitive breast, while a hail of them might be conceived as adding a degree of pleasurable excitement to the game. And she had but the one death to die.

But presently, there came protest from among the players. Clearly the bird was too far away. There was not a man among them who understood the meaning of Trillon's grin, as he turned their attention to the various means of quenching thirst that he had provided, and obediently went to alter the arrangement. When he had



THE CLEARING OF THE LAND

done, they were satisfied that the distance was more measurable; and did not perceive until they were lined up that the sun would be in their eyes, and that the inventor of the game had kindly moved them to a spot where there was a fresh and bountiful supply of small stones.

They threw again and the pullet continued her gyrations more madly than before. Dazed by the strong hot light, they began to swear oaths that the creature was bewitched.

"No," says Trillon. "She's an honest fowl, and any way I am not responsible for her character; but you shall have another, if you like."

They were ashamed to insist, the more so as Trillon's hospitality abounded. To be sure, it was still early in the day, but much violent exercise makes men thirsty . . .

It was the host himself who perceived that it was wise to remove the game to a third station; and this time he so adjusted light and distance that the pullet herself, weary of the fun, and having come to regard a rain of stones as a law of nature, at last settled down in a dumpy heap, and was bagged by the mayor.

Upon this there was much drinking and merry-making. The Corporation decided that Trillon was not mad after all; and so well enjoyed his company that they might have stayed there the whole day, but for the wingèd arrival of a small boy who shouted that *Madame la Mairesse* was on her way thither, with a word or two on her tongue.

Thereupon the party came to an abrupt end; and not a man among them remembered at first the original errand.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

The mayor turned homeward, with a small inward prayer of thanks that he had a gift of propitiation tucked under his arm; the Corporation followed almost as light-hearted, in that they were not as yet sought out by wives with a word or two on their tongues.

They were already climbing the slope into the little town, still under the convoy of the wingèd small boy, when one that had a bad name among his companions for being more jealous than the others, after some consideration, spoke up: "But in the end, neighbours, how do we know that the fellow has any right in the world to the land he has grabbed?"

"Do you want his stone-heaps, Anseùme?" said another, punching the objector's ribs.

"Not I," said he. "But I have left my work all the morning, being assured by the mayor that it was a public duty; and what have I got for my pains . . .?"

"All that," said the mayor, waving a majestic hand, "all that will adjust itself later."

Not more than his following did the excellent man see with his eyes or in imagination, the look that Trillon sent after the group, as he stood alone with Flouro, chuckling over the three great bare tracts in his *mas*. "The labour was cheap at the price," he informed the dog. "If I go on as I have begun, I shall be a rich man through no fault of my own. What it is to have a brain — eh, Flouro? If Madeloun does not appreciate what she is getting . . ."

He sat down to his breakfast and a long smoke. What was the need of working? He had only to think up something else . . .

CHAPTER XXIII

HOW THE WORK WENT ON

As a result of his meditations, Trillon arose early the next morning, and went into the village. He had a plan.

It was a holiday, and he found, as he expected to find, some half-dozen boys playing bowls under the Cross before the church. It was a game of rivalry: the one who hit the mark most frequently in a given number of trials pocketed the sous of the entire company. Trillon watched them for some time, while they cast upon him timid sidelong glances, being too awed by his reputation to address him.

When he had stood by long enough, as he judged, he said: "I know a better game than that."

And when they asked him what, he said it could be taught only at the Pit of Artaban.

At this, some were frightened, but others were curious. "Come, then, if you like. There will be more sous in it than you have seen for many a long day." He strolled away easily, his hands thrust into his red sash, his wide sky-blue trousers puffing in the wind.

The boys consulted and he let them put their heads

THE GOLDEN HAWK

together, whistling all the while to a tune of his own invention:

"The sun stood high,
The wind blew dry —"

Two of the bigger lads parted from the others and began to run by his side.

"Ever hear the story of the man who went to Cavaïoun to buy asses' eggs?" he put to them abruptly. And at the *word* story, several who were hovering timidly about, drew close.

"Eh, well, you know," he began, "there was a man called Janet, who was not very bright . . ."

He had quite a small gathering by this time, and turned to walk back along the village street.

And still as he went he told how Janet toiled from shop to shop in search of this strange commodity, until at last he met a merchant who was his match, who sold him for five francs a big yellow melon, and bade him take it home carefully lest it hatch by the way . . . By the time he reached this point of the adventure, he had so many boys that he might have been a second Pied Piper. But the girls he did not encourage.

The villagers whom he met looked upon him with suspicion, but nodded in memory of past hospitality. They did not incline to words, nor did he. Occasionally a mother ran out, snatched her offspring and bore him shrieking away; but still it was a good company that passed along the road to the Pit of Artaban, and heard how Janet was riding home on his donkey, with his basket

HOW THE WORK WENT ON

balanced carefully before him; and how the donkey stumbled and Janet fell into the road; and how sitting there he saw his precious egg fly and roll and smash itself against a tree, and beheld a small, grey, long-eared thing bound away into the woods; and how he did not budge, but howled for the young ass that he had lost. It was not until they had nearly reached the Pit of Artaban that he condescended to explain the mystery:

"The melon had hit a hare, and the hare ran — what would you?"

The volunteers arrived in high good humour; and he marshalled them on the plateau in front of the windmill.

"Now, my boys," said he, "did any of you ever hear of one Marius who was a great general of the Romans, and is still talked of hereabouts?"

"I know," piped one voice, "I have heard my father say he made the old road that goes up into the town."

"And there's Marius's Camp on the top of Bregas," said another. "Did he come here?"

And a third: "He fought a big battle with somebody over to the eastward."

And a fourth: "That's him cut in the old stone under the two cypresses on the other side of the hill."

"Yes," says Trillon, "that's all true and more. And whenever he wanted roads made or bridges or anything of the sort, he got his soldiers to do it, and when they worked all together, it was done as quickly as you would scarcely believe. Now the game that I mean is that you should be the soldiers of Marius and build me a wall; and to the boy who makes his highest and best by dinner-

THE GOLDEN HAWK

time, I will give a franc; but every boy who builds anything at all shall have some sous for his work. What say you — *hein?*”

They were not slow to see, or to approve, or to act. Almost before the words were out of his mouth, they were running to collect stones. But with the instinct of the true generalissimo, he called a halt until he had measured out such portions of his estate as he especially wished to fence in for appearance's sake, not troubling himself, for example, where the path climbed the hill steeply.

In a very short time his legion was at work, swarming and quarrelling over stones too large to carry, visibly skinning the earth as they filled their smocks, and under directions collected heaps, each by the place where he was to build. And it was not long before the wall itself — *mur sec*, I believe they call it — constructed of unhewn stones, fitted into one another loosely and without mortar, began to be traceable. The width of it Trillon measured off all the way; and then he left the legionaries to their own devices, save that now and again he kept an inferior workman from sudden death, when threatened by his own toppling structure. It was wonderful how much progress was made by the time the church clock rang out the hour of noon.

Promptly, the *majouraie* called a halt and paid off. Jaquelin, the acolyte, was accorded first prize, not without some grudging on the part of others. His piece of wall stood nearly half a metre high, and when one remembers that it was almost a metre wide, one must conclude that it was not so ill done, especially as it was firm enough to stand upon, without crumbling away.

HOW THE WORK WENT ON

It was three francs altogether that Trillon paid out; and if anyone denies to him the possession of true business instinct, here is the plain refutation. For this beggarly sum he had accomplished as much work as four active men would have done in a whole day at four times the cost, or as he himself, in his leisurely fashion of labour, could have finished in a week. And his legionaries tramped home in varying degrees of high feather, to show their extensive and joyously-earned wealth.

He invited them to come back if they liked, that same afternoon; and spent the dinner hour walking the round of his *mas*, with bread and sardines, deciding where and how the work might be improved and completed.

Well, some of the little band were diverted by their parents, being rapped and set to other tasks. But these, note you, were the inferior workmen who had brought home the least pay. The story had got abroad with additions and comments, and for every defection there were two fresh volunteers. I must confess, however, that except where the profit had been very large, as in Jaquelin's case, the fathers of the legionaries were still ignorant of the proceedings. They were abroad in the fields or in the quarries, and even when they came home were not, for the most part, told at once of the interesting proceedings at the Pit of Artaban. And the mothers, as a rule, did not count; some knew and did not care; some were away; only a few both knew and cared.

In the afternoon, the army was more numerous than before and worked unflaggingly. The wall rose until in places it had to be climbed over. Trillon, surveying the

THE GOLDEN HAWK

scene, decided that it would have to be his part later to go round and fill up the chinks. At sundown he disbursed four francs; but there is no doubt that full-grown labour would have cost him five times that sum. Jaquelin smarted a little, for his wall was only second best. A new recruit, Guihèn, the younger brother of Pèire, the quarryman, a lubberly chap of twelve or thereabouts, had carried off the prize, thus early showing an instinct in the handling of stone.

"To-morrow," says Trillon, when he dismissed them, "you can come or not as you like. The francs are here, and so is the wall." There were many besides Jaquelin who promised themselves to make good what chance they might have missed on that day.

Trillon ate in the twilight whatever he could lay hands on, his zeal for cooking having abated in the absence of appreciative companionship; then he fetched water from the distant spring, cared for his farmyard; and long after the village was in bed proceeded to carry on his work alone.

It was not wall-building by torchlight that appealed to his fancy now — by no means. It was something far more dramatic.

If you had an estate smothered in growth of furze and broom, often to a height of four or five feet, how would you be rid of the tangle? Trillon decided that the easiest way was to burn it. There had been no rain for many months, and he found by experiment that the stuff ignited like straw. A touch of the match would set the whole sky aflame.

HOW THE WORK WENT ON

Why he waited until then, I cannot tell you. It was surely not that he disliked an audience for his performances; it was most certainly not that he dreaded interference; it must have been, I conclude, sheer selfish desire to have the spectacle to himself, somewhat after the manner of Nero's little conflagration in Rome.

But whatever his motive, he went from bush to bush and from clump to clump, setting them alight until all at once he was encircled by a splendour as of many campfires. The stars above grew pale over against the myriads of little golden serpents that ran in swift trails along the crackling stems of the furze, and the whole mountain-side, even down in the hollow of Artaban, was ruddy with warm light, and jewelled over with flying sparks.

When the plateau was humming with the flames, Trillon sat down on a boulder, in the heart of all that radiance, his yellow dog huddled close to his knee and shaking with fear or with the grandeur of the sight, his farmyard muttering uneasily, his mule snorting with baseless alarm that the danger might somehow find communication along the stones and run to devour him. Oh, it was safe enough! But Trillon was not thinking of safety or of danger. There in the stir and life of the flames his imagination was moved by memories of Madeloun, his "little nun," as he called her tenderly to himself; and he got out his fiddle and played, with no consciousness, however, that he was aping a great and evil lord of the world.

It pleased his fancy to sit there picking the strings into tunes half remembered, half improvised, while the streams

THE GOLDEN HAWK

of starry rockets died away to a heartening glow, and the glow to such a soothing play of red embers as sends a man to sleep with pleasant thoughts. It seemed to him as he lay in his windmill, looking out through the unguarded door, that he was in the thick of a great and friendly host, whether of men or spirits was small matter. The fancy served to cheer him, if cheering he needed, on his enterprise; and he fell asleep before the red had all vanished, at peace with himself and the world.

CHAPTER XXIV

VISITORS AT THE MAS

IN the morning, while Trillon was still surveying with triumph the clearance that he had made in the bush, and wondering why his small army did not return, he was astonished and rather pleased by the advent of the village guard along the road by which all things came to him. It seemed to presage battle, and Trillon was always ready for a skirmish of any sort. He gladly put aside all thought of the work that he had not begun.

The guard of Castelar is a tall personage, important with the duty laid upon him of keeping the peace in his community. He is, so to speak, a deputy-gendarme, rarely called into service except in times of election-rows and disputes over land or water; but upon such occasions he wears the cap of authority and acts as arbitrator and peacemaker, when the spirit of the Midi runs away with his fellows.

So tremendous was the dignity of this approaching individual that more than once he stumbled and all but fell on the rough mountain track.

Trillon looked down good-humouredly, Flouro hugging

THE GOLDEN HAWK

his knee, ready to fly at a moment's notice, and make an end of dignity, deputy and all.

"*Hoi*," says Trillon. "Good-day. Drink coffee with me this morning?"

The guard looked up with as stiff and soldierly an air as possible: "Sir, I come on the mayor's business."

"Eh, well, that won't prevent your drinking coffee, I take it." Trillon retreated so abruptly that the guard was obliged to follow or lose him out of earshot.

It is rather awkward hurling speech after a man whose desire is not to hear what you have to say. The guard's mumblings did not do him credit.

"My papers?" said Trillon, with civil amazement. "You say you want to see my papers? It's too early in the morning to show papers, and as for letting them go out of my hands — tell the mayor to come himself if he wants a look."

But the guard found other words on his tongue.

"Right?" asks Trillon, setting down the second coffee-cup that he had just produced. "'Right?' says the man? I'll show you my right if you don't clear off my land in two minutes." Yellow sparks shot into his eyes.

The guard retreated a step, but he unfortunately permitted himself to laugh at the quality of the land.

"Laugh at me, do ye, neighbour?" says Trillon, advancing. "Yes, it's my land — it's my farm. Will you do me the honour to admit that it's my farm?"

The lank guard executed a backward dance before the thrust that he anticipated.

"It may as well be now," says Trillon, uttering his

VISITORS AT THE MAS

thought aloud. "I shall have to fight with the community sooner or later. Why not begin with the most dangerous member?" He could not control his irony at the relic of authority sidling away before him. You see, it was the bruit of madness that daunted the deputy-gendarme. With any of the villagers, especially when they had been for a few hours at the café, he might cope; but with this yellow-eyed stranger from the great world outside, he found it advisable to use a certain amount of caution. However, his instructions, which he trembled to recall, were, failing a sight of the legal papers, to bring Trillon captive to the Hôtel de Ville in the Place du Connétable de Montferrand, where he might be interviewed by the Corporation in a body. But even as he remembered, he was retreating still towards the edge of the bank, and the favourable moment for striking the blow did not come.

"Go back to the town," says Trillon, "and tell the fathers that this farm is mine, and that I will uphold my right to it against any of them singly and in succession; but for the honour of Provence, which is theirs as well as mine, I would fight them all together. For their own credit, however, that will not do. Go."

But the ignominy of the message stirred the guard from his ague. Lowering his head, something after the fashion of *Lou Bramaire*, when he is much goaded in the arena at Arles, he rushed blindly at the desired captive. He was a strong man, and if he came on like a bull, Trillon met him like another; and for a few moments they swayed near the edge of the bank, with locked horns. But the issue was certain, for in Trillon's square-built frame

THE GOLDEN HAWK

there was a solidity of muscle such as the lanky guard had had no occasion to develop in his rare encounters with the peaceable villagers.

He regretted this when Trillon dangled him by the coat-collar so that he hung like a cat over the bank. To be sure, there was small danger, but the indignity was insufferable. He wriggled with violence, but to no end.

"Eh, well," says Trillon, speaking the more deliberately, to cover a little breathlessness, "are you convinced that this is my *mas*, and that I have a right to it? I shall hold you there until you are of my mind."

Being presently persuaded by some little further experiment that Trillon's staying powers were, to say the least, equal to his own, the guard concluded that it was more graceful to give in early than late; and indicated by as much of a nod as he could compass, that this was the case.

Then Trillon dropped him upon the pebble-strewn rocky path below, where he landed with some damage to his hands and knees and nose.

"Tell the mayor," says Trillon, looking down upon him still without rancour, "tell him that I return you with compliments and thanks, having no use for your services. God be with you, and mend your bruises!"

Thereupon he went back to his windmill, and to cool his blood sat down in the shade and smoked a dozen cigarettes without stopping.

It was all very foolish, say you? But I never for a moment pretended that Trillon was a sensible man.

After a time, it occurred to him that his little army of

VISITORS AT THE MAS

workers was slow to come. He was beginning to wonder how he should get his wall built, and whether all his brilliant schemes were to be so suddenly dashed, when a single head — the pudgy face of Jaquelin — topped the edge of the bank.

"Ha," says Trillon. "What now?"

He was not greatly surprised to hear that his yesterday's plan had been received with such strong disfavour on the part of the men of the village that his young army had been scattered to the wind on various duties, and, in part, to school; and that Jaquelin, alone, having rebelled because the memory of the franc was still sweet, had been able to come by escaping through the rotten roof of a shed where he had been deposited for safe-keeping. Besides, his parents had the reputation of money-grubbers in the village.

Trillon reflected a little during the breathless tale. It was clear to him that the townsmen were either afraid of him or hostile to such content that coppers, even silver coins, had for the time lost their significance. He decided that in the future he would aim to be more politic. Meanwhile, there was Jaquelin, a ready, a willing servant . . . But Jaquet alone could not build a wall; nor could they two together make much progress.

Trillon pondered, chin in hand; and presently he found the thing to do.

"Jaquelin," he said, "can you print letters?"

And straightway Jaquet's feathers were all a-plume. It would seem that he was the prize-boy at the school in all such matters.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"Eh, well," says Trillon, with a bit of a sigh, "don't boast too much, for you shall be put to the test. As for myself I never would learn a thing of that sort, and sometimes I think it is half a pity. However, that is not to the point . . ."

He rose and fetched from his storehouse certain smooth planks and a saw; also a brush and a tin of paint, which, when opened, proved to be of a brilliant vermilion that won Jaquet's soul in the twinkling of an eye.

"Now," says Trillon, "first I shall saw the boards into proper lengths, and then you shall print on them the words that I say, all spelled just as you find them in the books, and when you have done, you shall have another silver franc — *hein?*"

They set to work, the prospect of so much wealth rendering Jaquelin a joyful slave.

Trillon had soon finished, and while he was looking about for the next thing to do, Fortune, who never seemed willing that her favourite should work too long at a time — Fortune sent Pèire, the quarryman, strolling that way.

It must not be supposed that Pèire had come on community business. The plain fact is that he had for some days been debarred from work by a bad throat, and this morning, feeling somewhat brisker than usual, he had wearied of idling about his mother's house, and had sauntered forth, pipe in mouth — very bad for his throat, no doubt — in the direction of the Pit of Artaban. Curiosity impelled him to see what was going on there; for, indeed, this tract of desert land was at the moment the

VISITORS AT THE MAS

most interesting spot within many miles of Castelar. And so he was lured into the toils of misfortune.

Nearer he advanced and nearer, seeing nothing, hearing nothing of the reputed madman. And when at length he climbed, not without caution, up the bank, he perceived a small boy in a smock, kneeling with his back turned, doing something on the ground; and on each side of him Trillon and the dog, both so absorbed in watching that they did not perceive the approach of the invader. And so Pèire came and looked too, and what he saw so greatly astonished him that he could not forbear a loud *Hoi*.

Trillon turned on his heel, and Flouro began a sharp barking about the quarryman's trousers.

"*MAS ARTABAN*," read Pèire slowly.

"Do you not comprehend?" asked Trillon civilly. He bore no grudge against Pèire, though if he had known of certain passages of more than friendly interest between the quarryman, not so long before, and a pretty young woman . . .

Pèire looked at him, looked down again, and pipe in hand, continued reading: NO ADMISSION WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION; WARE THE DOG; THE STABLES; THE BAKE-HOUSE; THE FORGE; THE CART-SHED; THE GRANARY; THE PIG-EON-HOUSE; — this was as far as Jaquelin had progressed. The wet boards, looking as if they had been marked in blood, lay spread about him in every direction.

"Thunder-of-the-Air!" exclaimed the quarryman. "What does it all mean?"

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"It means," said Trillon very slowly, "that I wish to leave no doubt in the mind of Castelar that this ground you stand upon is a farm, and that I am a farmer — even though my vineyards be not yet planted, and though it is not possible to set out olives or almonds until the winter-time. Have you any doubt in the matter?"

Seeing that Pèire still looked at him as if his meaning were obscure, he asked again: "Have you seen the guard this morning?"

No, Pèire was able to say that he had not.

"Eh, well, I have convinced him," said Trillon. "If you still feel any doubt in your mind that this is a farm and that I am its owner, go talk to the guard and you may be persuaded without more trouble — *hein?*"

Pèire stared unwinking for a while; then glancing at his pipe, which had gone out, said amiably: "Have you a match?"

Trillon laughed, and the yellow sparks went out of his eyes. He produced the desired bit of wood, saying: "Come, I like you. We may as well settle the matter now. You're a big fellow and worth fighting."

"Heavens!" said Pèire peaceably. "I don't want to fight you or any man. And as for this patch of rock you may call it a farm or you may call it a ship — all's one to me. And if it pleases you to be considered a farmer — eh, well, I don't dispute. In Castelar they say you're a madman."

"Hah!" says Trillon. "Indeed?" And at his voice Jaquelin looked up from his painting, showing a face most horribly streaked with artificial gore. And as he

VISITORS AT THE MAS

looked, he thought it wiser to lay aside his paint-brush for the moment and to scramble to the top of a big boulder, whence he could enjoy the probable scrap without danger to himself.

Trillon controlled himself, however, and pointing to his wall said: "What call you that?"

"The devil" — began Pèire, but was checked.

"Is it or is it not a wall?"

At this point Pèire could not control a roar of laughter, to which the monkey face of Jaquelin contributed not a little.

Trillon waited until this mirth should be concluded. "Eh, well?" he said at last, almost gentle.

"Eh, well?" Pèire stood up to him, with surprising squareness.

"Is it a farm?" persisted Trillon.

Then Pèire gave way and laughed again cheerfully: "To be sure, how blind I am; and you — now I look at your clothes — if ever there was a farmer in all Provence . . ."

"My friend," says Trillon, very solemnly, "you are a wise man; but I am almost sorry we have missed the fight . . ."

"If that's troubling you," said Pèire, and began to stuff his pipe, hot ashes and all, into his pocket.

But Trillon protested: "Let me finish. I have learned after some thinking that in this world things are very largely what we call them. Jaquelin, you hear plainly that there is at least one man from Castelar, besides the guard, who is convinced. We shall soon have the town

THE GOLDEN HAWK

—including the priest — of our opinion. Now go on with your painting, boy, or you see no silver of mine."

Pèire returned to his pipe with some anticipation of the good story he would have to tell at the café, on the following Saturday night. He was minded to carry the joke a little further.

"Yes," said he, "I cannot see that your farm lacks anything but a mistress."

"And she," said Trillon, "will soon be on the way."

The quarryman looked at him, and stopped smoking, as there crept into his slow mind certain vague rumours . . .

He could not speak, but Trillon was not loth to tell: "Yes, it's Madeloun Borel . . ."

Pèire knocked the ashes out of his pipe: "I think we'll have that fight after all, although for a man with a bad throat . . ."

"So *you* have something to say about her?" said Trillon. "Eh, well, she seems to have been more of a flirt than I thought. I will fight you with pleasure, but not with a bad throat . . ."

If Pèire appreciated this favour, he gave no sign, merely putting himself on his defence with a sharp "Come on."

But Trillon shook his head: "Not to-day — another time. Look, now, there are other ways. The girl is mine, as I'll show you. Shall we throw dice for her?"

Pèire was amazed out of his attitude: "What? You would risk it all on a chance?"

"I always risk," said Trillon. "I merely desire to convince you; and fighting is out of the question to-day. Got any dice? I have. Very good, we'll use yours"—as

VISITORS AT THE MAS

they were wonderingly produced — “then you will know that I play fair. Now, shall I show you my luck? You take the risk?”

Pèire considered a moment, then shook his head. “No,” said he, “the girl is out of the question now, but if she ever comes back, I want my chance with the others . . .”

Trillon looked so disappointed that it was clear he was ready to fling his whole future down with the dice.

Said Pèire: “But I have a curiosity, none the less, to try your luck. Come, I’ll throw with you for a franc . . .”

Instantly Trillon picked up one of the boards as yet unpainted, and laid his stake upon it, signifying that Pèire should begin; and when the latter read eleven, he promptly capped it with a twelve.

“Again,” said Pèire, flushing a little, as he handed over his franc; and when Trillon flung a four, he was ready to triumph until he perceived that his own sum was a two. This time the stakes were doubled.

So young Jaque painted, while the farmer and the quarryman were at dice; and this state of affairs continued until the clock on the Hôtel de Ville had struck twelve, and again, after its fashion, repeated the strokes. The second time, Pèire flung down the board so that the heap of coins was scattered among the stones and some were smeared with red paint.

“Are you the devil?” he asked, getting shakily to his feet.

“No,” says Trillon, summoning Jaquelin to come and collect the coins, “but I am a richer man than when we

THE GOLDEN HAWK

began this morning. I warned you of my luck. Are you going home?"

Pèire looked at him very bitterly: "I have no more money until I go to work and earn it. I shall pay you out for this."

"Very good," says Trillon cheerfully. "When you can. Every man has his time. But take back your money if you like. I don't want it."

Pèire turned and might have stooped, but he could not meet the mockery in his opponent's eyes.

He thrust his hands into his pockets and turned to descend the bank. "No," says he, "that's yours. But I'll get even with you another way."

"Got it all?" said Trillon as Jaquelin handed him the little heap. "Now you shall have fair proportion. We seem to be making friends rapidly in Castelar. I wonder who will be our next visitor?"

CHAPTER XXV

DISCOVERY

It was perhaps some ten days before any one of note in the village troubled himself — or ventured — to make personal investigation into the progress of the new *mas*. It was not that Castelar had ceased to be interested; indeed, it caught with almost scandalous greed at any scrap of news that came its way. But, although rumours were few and unsatisfactory, people were afraid to go as far as the Pit after the adventure of Pèire and the guard, neither of whom had told the whole truth or the exact truth as to what he had encountered there. The mayor, indeed, felt that he ought to take the matter in hand, but to do so the evil moment gave out that he was much occupied with late hay-making.

In the end, it was Father Gougoulin who made discovery, and that by accident. He had been perhaps too contemptuous of the madman. However, when on the morning of a Saint's day, he found his chief acolyte missing, and had to manage with the younger and more stupid ministrant alone, and was thereby humiliated even in an empty church, he found it time to take measures. Upon

THE GOLDEN HAWK

investigation it proved that Jaquelin had been diverted from his normal course of life by this devil of a Trillon, and was being led into — the village knew not what. He spoke more than one sharp word to the parents, who were poor enough (the father incalculably lazy) because they had allowed their child to imperil his soul for the sake of a few bits of silver. And when he wrung from them, unwilling, the fact that Jaque was that very day on duty at the Pit of Artaban, all in a fire of indignation he resolved to undertake the fatigue of the walk and confront the fellow to his face. But he made no attempt until he had been strengthened by a midday meal and a nap.

He moved slowly, and with an accumulating fund of remarks; and ascended above the bank with the rubicund dignity of the sun himself. It was a pity that this impressive entrance was lost to all the world except the yellow Flouro, who came bounding over the loose wall and received the visitor with a shower of barks and futile clutches at the priestly robe.

Defending himself as well as he could with his stick, Father Gougoulin shouted in a voice that would have exorcised devils: "Call off your brute!" And at that, Jaquelin came running from the windmill, and upon seeing his reverend father in God, remembered that it was a Saint's day, and visibly crumpled up into a shapeless moral heap.

"Where is your master?" demanded the priest, stepping with the air of one who would not yield an inch, over a low place in the wall.

And Jaque was so abashed that he could not answer.

DISCOVERY

"Is he here?" asked Father Gougoulin, perceiving the boy's state of mind.

Jaque found courage to shake his head.

Then the priest looked about him, at the surface of the plateau, half bare of stones, and scarred where the furze and other rank growth had been cleared away. From the standpoint of beauty, the state of nature was doubtfully improved; and regarded as a farm, the place could not yet be called as an unqualified success.

He grew suddenly aware that he was looking at a sign-post rather like a wayside cross, and began to laugh. "What is the meaning of this?" he demanded, pointing to the word *BAKE-HOUSE*. Without giving the boy time to answer, he, forgetting his priestly dignity, and with his plump hands tucked into his sash, broke into bubbles of laughter worthy almost of a good man, as he read aloud the gory labels to non-existent portions of the *mas*.

"Call a cat a tiger," said he, "and you can scare a village; but *WARE THE DOG*—that's no bad advice. Let us look further into the matter."

He appreciated for a time the disadvantages of not keeping more in touch with one's parishioners. However, he had his laugh out.

In the end, the echo of his own voice among the upper rocks sobered him a little; he turned to Jaque again: "You are sure he is not here?"

"He has gone away with his mule, father," said the boy timidly, "and he will come back to-morrow morning."

Then the priest turned to have a look about. For the moment, curiosity was his strongest emotion. He strode

THE GOLDEN HAWK

up to the open door of the windmill — for by this time Trillon had fashioned a primitive board screen which would keep out autumn chill and straying creatures, and he looked within at the ship-shape packing of the household belongings. Trillon had not been at sea in vain. Then the old man went further, Jaque trailing a little way off at his heels, and gazed down into the ancient Pit, the nearer segment of which was transformed by means of poles and worn-out fish-nets, probably bought at some junkshop in Marseilles, into a barnyard. He counted two cocks and nine hens — no small crew.

"How many eggs a day?" he leered at Jaque; but the boy only gaped.

Then first the ecclesiastical eye took in the full significance of the wall that straggled up the hillside as far as the quarry. To be sure, it was uneven and crooked, crumbling here and there, and occasionally had toppled over; but taken in a large way, as a whole, it was such a wall — at least, an approach to such a wall — as encloses hundreds of little Provençal farms.

The priest followed its course, then laughed again at the desolate ground that it set apart. "Anything growing, my child?" he asked the boy genially.

"We shall plant in the autumn, father," answered Jaque, identifying himself with his master.

Then the priest remembered the morning's defection: "Oho! and what were you doing that you came not to Mass this morning?"

"I forgot" — the culprit hung his head.

"Indeed, you forgot? But what were you doing here?"

DISCOVERY

"He told me to mend the wall as much as I could, and to feed the fowls, and to take care of the things . . ."

"And he is gone — where?" asked the priest sharply.

"I do not know —"

Father Gougoulin held up a warning forefinger.

"Indeed, he did not tell me," said Jaque, with obvious sincerity.

"And to-night? What happens to-night?"

Jaque looked frightened.

"What will you do to-night?" Father Gougoulin pressed the question home.

"He will come back early in the morning."

"And you will be alone here all the night?"

Jaque looked more frightened.

"Answer me — tell me the truth!" There was no resisting that command.

"No," said Jaque, "my father is coming."

Ah, the secret was out now! Corrupting the community, was he, to his own ends? The young man needed a lesson, it was clear. But what mad work was he about now? Father Gougoulin would like to get that out of the faithless acolyte.

"And how much money are you to have for this performance?" he asked.

Jaque looked troubled. He could not see where the heinous sin came in, except, of course, that he had forgotten Mass that morning. He answered beseechingly: "Five francs, father. And we are poor, you know. And we have only to keep up the fire and — and such things."

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"Hm," said the priest, "now tell me all that you know of your master's doings and goings."

Here was an authority to be obeyed. Jaque dared not refuse, but he was rather worried by the situation, none the less.

"He harnessed the mule to the cart early this morning, and he took some food with him, and he said he would be gone all the day, and would come back some time in the night . . ."

"Why in the night?" asked Father Gougoulin; but Jaque did not know that.

"And then — what else?"

But Jaque's memory seemed to be exhausted.

"Think — think," said his ghostly father, "and I will make the penance light for your sin this morning."

Jaque thought long, then got out: "I believe he said he was going to market."

"To market?" said the priest. "Aha!" But after all this was not impossible — or even unreasonable.

"Well — well?" Impatience grew upon him.

"But whether it was Cavaïoun or Carpentras, I cannot remember," said the boy stubbornly.

A less astute man than Gougoulin might have perceived prevarication there.

"But it is not market-day at either of those towns, as I happen to know," said the priest coolly. "Was it by any chance Fontvieille?"

When Jaquelin flushed red and clearly did not know how to answer, he judged that his guess was right; and it gave him the clue that he required. He sat down upon a

DISCOVERY

boulder, a fat hand on each knee, and meditated a while, Jaque watching him apprehensively from a distance.

"So," said he to himself, when he rose to depart, "so and so — and so! It is probable that the young man has been planning a coup d'état. But since there is a telegraph at Mausanne, we may thwart him yet. To send a message by the postman — a word to the Mother Superior — that will be easy enough and can do no harm. If his errand is innocent, he will not know; but if he is attempting mischief — well, well, I should like to be here when he returns. So! And now I think we have provided against possible contingencies."

In the very act of getting over the wall, he turned: "Tell your master from me — when he comes home — that I wish to see him at the presbytery as soon as possible. And as for your penance, we shall see about that when you come to confession."

Then in high good-humour, he trotted back briskly to send his telegram before the postman got away on the return journey. It was as well to allow the Mother Superior plenty of time.

"The young devil!" he chuckled over Trillon; and he confessed to a fellow-feeling for him in his prank. But none the less he held fast to his purpose.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE END OF THE LONG WHITE ROAD

SHE was so sure of her hope, the little Madeloun — so very sure of her man — that she gave no thought for the end of her novitiate, beyond now and again when her cheeks burned hot at her seeming acquiescence, or paled with a passing fear that she might have to go through with it after all.

Even when the day was appointed for her to take the veil, and had come within imaginable distance, within the measure of some weeks, she lived still in her dreams and dwelt ever upon the details how the thing would be accomplished. She made no plans in case he failed her. It never entered her head that he would not come; and yet if she had known him better she might have felt the grave peril of the situation.

On a day, late in the afternoon, she knelt in the church, not praying — I must confess that she was not praying — nor even contemplating the beauty of the Holy Life. She was in the chapel because it gave her an excuse to be alone with her thoughts.

To her came Sister Marto with a certain flutter in her kind face.

THE END OF THE LONG WHITE ROAD

"The Mother sent me to you," she said. "You are to go to your room and stay there awhile. This is a solemn time for you, Madaleno."

The girl looked at her shrewdly, questioningly: "Sister Marto, what have I done now? Have I not obeyed—?"

"Obey now, then, without question," said the nun, yet could not keep the pity out of her gentle voice.

"But something has happened, Sister," pleaded Madeloun. "I can see it in your eyes, hear it when you speak."

"I know nothing," murmured Sister Marto, turning away in confusion.

But the girl seized her two hands and studied her averted face.

"If ever you were kind to me, Sister, be kind now!"

The nun returned the look of appeal with sympathy: "Child, child, I can only tell you to go pray. Now, that you are so far on the road . . ."

Madeloun shut her lips and moved away: "I must help myself, I see."

"What would you do, O Madeloun?" cried the nun, hastening after her. "Look, now, I know nothing, but the Mother has just had a telegram. I do not know what was in it. Perhaps it had nothing to do with you . . ."

Madeloun stopped short in her walk and considered. She knew what a telegram was. She had even seen such a thing. It was an expensive way people had of sending a message quickly. She had so much food for thought that she went quite peaceably, almost as if unconsciously,

THE GOLDEN HAWK

to her little room where the last rays of the sun pierced the plane-tree dimly and sent a faint shimmer upon the stone floor.

"I am sorry, Madaleno," said the nun faltering, "but the Mother said I must lock you in and bring her the key . . ."

She stopped, amazed at the sudden blaze of light from the girl's eyes. But Madeloun caught herself in what she was about to say; and turned her back. It would not do for even Sister Marto to know how she had poured oil on the fire of hope.

"Very well," she said quietly. "To be sure, I have no understanding why . . ."

"Have you not, Madeloun? Have you not, indeed?" asked the nun.

"It is you who have seen the telegram —" Madeloun shrugged. "What I have done to deserve it is best known to the Mother."

"You could trust me, child," said the nun piteously.

"Could I?" asked Madeloun. "But your conscience would make you go tell. However, there is nothing to say, only" — she could not control a sudden leap of joy into her face — "only I think somehow I shall be saved to-night. I know no more than you."

"Are you honest, Madeloun?"

"Eh, well," says Madeloun, "he told me so, and — now I am honest."

"Told you? You have seen him?" asked Sister Marto, with a sort of fear.

The girl hesitated, then admitted it: "Once. He found

THE END OF THE LONG WHITE ROAD

a way. He will find it again. I have no fear. Go and tell the Mother if you like."

"I shall not do that," said Sister Marto, after a pause. "And wherever you are — O my child, be not rash! — I shall always pray for you — always —"

Her voice wavered and broke; she leaned a moment towards Madeloun, kissed her on the forehead, and went quickly out. The prisoner heard the key turn in the lock.

Madeloun sat down on her bed and clasped her knees, shivering in a very ecstasy of waiting. How long? It would not be before dark, she was sure. And if the Mother was warned . . . Well, she might find her match. . . . She might lock the door, but there was always the window . . . Once before by the window . . .

She looked up with a shock about the heart, as she realized a sudden presence there. The big brown face of Zefir, the hound, looked in upon her inquiringly. Then he moved across the window and there was the rattle of a chain. Clearly it was intended that he should give warning if any stranger came that way. A moment Madeloun was daunted, then her spirit rose with indignation. "In the face of all of them," she said, and began to put together a little bundle of such clothes as she could lay hands upon. Her habit she could not change, for she had no other dress; but she laid aside the collar and coif and put her hair up under a handkerchief.

O the long, long hours! She had had no supper, by order undoubtedly; and she began, for all her ardours, to be very hungry. Zefir slept at times; but now and again turned restlessly, unused to a chain, sighed and yawned.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

Two or three times he lifted his head and listened, and then Madeloun climbed upon her chair and stood tip-toe to stroke him, but could not reach.

She got down again, and in her impatience dropped before the crucifix and prayed violently all the prayers she knew.

And when she had come quite to the end, she made a great and sudden resolve, that she would try as best she could to get out of the window herself, and out of the garden and into the road, and if he did not come, to save herself as she might. Whether she would walk to Castelar or not, was wholly undetermined in her mind.

She began to look about for means of escape. She could find nothing but the washing-stand; but when she had moved this, cautious of noise, and had climbed upon it by means of a chair, she could most easily crawl through the high window. She laughed to think how the Mother Superior had missed her calculation. To be sure, if they had been of the same fatness . . .

Zefir yapped at her a little, but soon licked her hand, when she tugged to free him from his chain; and the moment he was released, padded along the terrace to the steps that led down to the lower hall, and so to the kitchen. If the kitchen door were open, as might be, he would doubtless be found in the morning on the hearth-rug in his usual place. If not — but Madeloun was minded to have no doubt. She slipped off her shoes and followed the hound like a shadow to the foot of the stairs, where she sped a little prayer that she had done so, for the kitchen door was closed and the hound lay outside. She opened

THE END OF THE LONG WHITE ROAD

it and shut in the guard, who was only too glad to get out of the unaccustomed business of watching.

Then Madeloun returned to the terrace and sat down on the balustrade under the plane-tree. She waited so long that she shivered in the night air; and when the church clock began to strike, she was amazed to find that it was only ten. It is a pitiful thing to wait over-long the coming of love!

Madeloun fell presently into a sort of daze, telling herself dreamily that she must be thinking of flight, yet unable to move a limb. She was stirred at length by the shaking of the plane-tree that shadowed her. Some large bird, an owl, perhaps . . .

She pressed down her beating heart and listened.

The fluttering and rustling, nay, even creaking, went on. It must be a great bird — a very great bird. . . Ah, but what bird ever hummed low, "*O Magali, ma tant amado*"?

Close among the branches was the song, but it came nearer and nearer; and she leaned over the parapet ready for the arms that should be outstretched and the laugh of triumph.

"Can you come this way?" said he, flinging a hand out from the thick of the tree.

"Any way," said she bravely; and obeying his directions, she knotted well about her waist the sash that he flung to her. Not trusting her strength, he scrambled nearer to see that she was bound fast, then retreated along the branch so that this might not have to bear double weight, and bade her follow. She showed a neat agility, swinging

THE GOLDEN HAWK

herself from bough to bough, whenever she slipped being restrained by the sash which he had twisted round the big limb against which he was braced. When she reached the lowest branch in safety, he sent her a note of warning to wait, climbed down to her level, and there fixed himself in the heart of all the trunks together and lowered her carefully to the ground.

He scarcely paused for an embrace; but seized her hand and began to run swiftly through the garden, laughing under his breath, between the roses and over the grass-plots, groping along the wall until he found the rope ladder that he had hung there.

Their further progress was just perilous enough to be exciting, for the rope ladder was inclined to swing, and the top of the wall save where — I am sorry to say — Trillon had made a breach, was covered with broken glass. But here on the stones Madeloun perched like a shaky young bird, while Trillon drew up the ladder and hung it on the other side. Thence it was easy work, for he went first and caught her without misadventure, and in sheer exuberance of emotion carried her to the spot where he had fastened his *charrette* to a tree-stump; but there he left her to recover herself as best she might, while he returned to swing off the rope-ladder. He was rather desirous of leaving it there as an interesting lesson to the Mother Superior on ways of escape, but for once in his life reason prevailed.

When he reached the equipage, he seemed to gather that Madeloun had some doubt, for he deliberately lighted a match, and summing up her attitude with a shrewd

THE END OF THE LONG WHITE ROAD

glance, said: "It's nothing great for a bride — this. However, we shall better all that. I have stuffed some sacks with grass, and there's a coat to creep under . . ."

She said nothing, and he changed his tone: "But, if you repent . . .?"

"Don't be silly," she said, climbing up into the *charrette*; but he chose to disregard her admonition: "It's soon mended. We have only to ring the gate-bell." He made a movement as if to do so; but she laid a finger on his arm.

"Listen," he said, as he covered the pleading hand with his own, "I have been rich, and I am almost poor again. Two weeks ago I could have filled your apron with silver. It's all a chance — you shall not suffer, I swear. Will you take me or not?"

She made no answer in words, but nestled among the bags full of grass and drew the coat up to her chin.

"You must answer," said he.

And she: "Why don't you drive on?"

With a suppressed whoop, he had the reins loose and was on the front of the cart; and the mule had begun to trot along the level road under the blackness of the over-arching plane-trees.

For some kilometres the two were silent, save that Trillon whistled softly between his teeth. At length, he bent backwards and flung an arm across the girl's shoulder.

"Asleep?"

"No — dreaming," she confessed.

"Of what?"

But that she would not tell.

"No castles," said he. "Build no castles. We are

THE GOLDEN HAWK

poor now. But — I shall soon change all that. I have an idea —”

The good man! When had he not an idea? or when had he one that the world would call practicable?

They came out now and then from under the trees, where the road gleamed pale in the starlight; and jolted past the white farmhouses, where the dogs sometimes gave them violent greeting and escort for a long distance, and where the farmers must have turned in their beds and wondered who was abroad. They talked but little: a few love-words, a scrap of a plan, a hope, a sigh, a shiver, a touch of fear, a protecting hand now and then — that was all.

And so they began to ascend into the mountains, where the road became a mere double rut, with boulders here and there, and ridges of live rock and shoals of pebbles.

Madeloun, jolted into wakefulness, sat up, aware that the keen breath of the morning was upon them.

“Trillon,” she exclaimed suddenly, “I have left my bundle of clothes at the convent.”

“Never mind,” said he, laughing. “We are both beggars then; but we shall not stay so long.” He drew rein in the pallid light, and she could barely make out the parting of two ways. “Leleto,” he said, “the one is for Arles, and the wide world of wandering — Avignon perhaps — but freedom — a merry life. The other is for Castelar — where we must work to lift the curse. Which? *Hein?*”

“As you will,” said she meekly.

He was gently obstinate: “No, it is for you to say.

THE END OF THE LONG WHITE ROAD

Shall we take the chance or the hard way? Or — there is always the third course — to turn back."

"Not turn back," she said faintly.

"And then?"

"Home" — her voice dropped to a whisper.

Without a word, he turned the mule along the road that led still upward. Far away, looking high as a city among the clouds, and rosy in the dawn-light, they could see the little town — Castelar.

"What will you do with me?" she asked presently.

"Have you faith?" he would know. "Wait and see."

She did not dream that as he continued his serene whistle, he was turning hot and cold with the first sense of responsibility that had ever crossed his brain. It was all very well to knock about the world and live as one could, but with a girl on one's hands — and the necessity for a daily finding of bread and cheese — it made a man think a bit. Only his luck could help him out, he decided. But presently he put the worry away from him, as he slackened his reins and the mule began the ascent of the cobbled way to the rosy city on the heights.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE DISPOSITION OF MADELOUN

Soon after daybreak there came a long and furious knocking at the *Çabro d'Or*. It was not, you must understand, for the purpose of effecting an entrance, for in Castelar nobody ever locks a door at night; but only to call the inhabitants to a conference.

When Jousè stumbled downstairs, half dressed and in no amiable mood, he found a candle-end lighted in his dining-room, and by its feeble illumination perceived a runaway sister and her cavalier. It was small wonder that he sat down abruptly and said nothing.

"Yes," said Trillon, "you are surprised, no doubt. But I warned you it was not to my mind that Madeloun should turn nun; nor to hers, for that matter."

Madeloun seemed to shrink further into the handkerchief she had knotted about her hair, as Jousè stared at her; but she found no word to say.

"After all," continued Trillon, "it was no great business getting her off. I had not thought it would be so easy."

"But to keep her?" stammered Jousè. "Father Gougoulin —?"

THE DISPOSITION OF MADELOUN

Trillon shrugged: "I shall see him this morning about the banns. Meanwhile, the girl must stay here. I cannot take her to —"

"The windmill?" put in Jousè, with a smile.

"We shall see about that later," said Trillon curtly, "but until she is married, there is no place so fit for her as her father's house."

"As to that," said Jousè, "it happens to be my house — not her father's. And you anticipate no difficulties in the way of obtaining our consent?"

"We waste time talking," said Trillon, "and Madeloun is very tired. Call your wife and let us get this arrangement concluded."

"You have not answered my question," persisted Jousè, stifling a yawn.

Trillon turned to his sweetheart: "Look, Madeloun, you'd better leave us. Go out into the garden. This is business that we must talk and no woman's affair." She turned wistful eyes upon him, but dared not disobey. As she passed her brother, he deigned to put out a hand and draw her towards him with a negligent kiss on each cheek.

"Since you are foolish enough to be here, little sister," said he, not unkindly, "we must do the best we can for you."

Trillon went after her to make sure that the door was closed, then he came back with a proposition. "And now I will answer your question. As to consent, my good brother-in-law-to-be, that can always be purchased. I am prepared to pay —"

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"Yes, but how much money have you?" asked Jôusè rudely.

"That is my affair," answered Trillon, "as long as I can meet all reasonable demands upon it."

Jôusè shrugged: "You can talk. One cannot deny that you talk always. But I have yet to see why I should consent that my sister be taken out of the convent where she was placed in accordance with our mother's wish, and where she would have been safe and well provided for, in order to marry a man of whom — to put it as politely as I can — nobody knows anything, and a man without fixed *rente* or apparent means of support."

This was a tremendous speech for Jôusè; he panted from the effects of it.

"The sole reason is," said Trillon, "that the girl prefers the man in question to the convent."

"The girl," said Jôusè sharply, "is too young to know her mind. It is her elders who must act for her."

"But if I have Father Gougoulin's consent," insinuated Trillon, "what then?"

"Eh, well," said Jôusè, "then it is not my affair. I have spoken my mind."

But Emilio, unable longer to control her curiosity, had clattered down the stairs, her dress half buttoned, her hair and eyes bearing marks of the pillow.

"What is this?" she asked. "And what is your mind?"

She addressed her husband, but it was Trillon who answered: "My mind is that you should receive Madeloun here, for a consideration, until she is able to make such preparations as are needful for her wedding."

THE DISPOSITION OF MADELOUN

Then it was Emilio who stood open-mouthed, and had to have full explanations.

"What will be said in the village?" was her comment.

Trillon governed his impatience: "Look you, it need not be known how she got away from the convent. That's chiefly why I brought her here. Enough that she did not take kindly to the religious life. Let the village talk. If I arrange with the priest and you say nothing, what can be known?"

"And you propose," asked Emilio shrewdly, "to take her to that land you have bought — or, as they say, have not bought? And how do you mean to live?"

Trillon's answer came in the form of two twenty-franc pieces laid on the table. "That is a beginning if you keep silence, and treat the girl kindly, and let her have her way until I can settle her affairs. It is something, you cannot deny, that I have got her safely out of the hands of the nuns."

But Jósè and Emilio did not regard this high-handed proceeding with obvious favour. The latter crossed herself, and the former perhaps to hide some embarrassment, put out the guttering candle, and went to open the street door to the morning.

Without another word, Trillon strolled through the other door leading into the garden, where he found his sweetheart shivering greatly even under his heavy coat, as she leaned over the wall and tried to see through the mists that clouded the valley below.

"It is arranged," said Trillon, with a comforting arm about her. "You will be quite all right here, and well treated until we can look about us — till I can render the

THE GOLDEN HAWK

mas a little more fit for its mistress. Meanwhile" — he slipped a bank-note into her hand — "you can be making preparations. Get a market-day ticket to Arles —"

He could see her burning face even in the dim light. "It is a shame," said she, "and worse than a shame, that you should pay for my wedding clothes!"

He took this lightly: "But I shall have to buy you clothes afterwards, all your life, dear child," said he, "so what matter when we begin? It is quite the same when we are in our graves."

"It is not the same to me now," said she. "And when I think of it, I am almost sorry I left the convent."

"Shall I take you back then?" he asked, with a twinkling eye.

At that, she laid her face against his shoulder and said that she must be content.

"It is the better part," he answered. "And now, three kisses and I must be away. I have many things to do; but I shall come back and tell you how they go."

She gave him the kisses with a sudden abandonment of passion that amazed him rather than stirred to any return. In that moment of action he was hardly capable of even sympathetic response; he was too busy clearing away in his own mind the figurative boulders that lay heaped high on his path.

When he had departed, going first to the Pit of Artaban to see that his property was safe in the charge of the acolyte and his slothful parent, Madaleno continued in the same place, dreaming new dreams and remembering the old that were coming true.

THE DISPOSITION OF MADELOUN

Emilio came out to her there, and barely kissed the cheek that with all simplicity was offered.

"Eh, well," said Emilio, "will you come in and have some coffee? I cannot help thinking you were better off in the convent."

Madeloun looked at her with sudden anger, but checked the words on her tongue.

Then Emilio spied the bank-note: "But did he give you that? Before I would go to a man without a dowry —"

"You taunt me?" gasped Madeloun. "When you have it all — everything here? I will not stay one moment — I will —"

Then Emilio was frightened, remembering that the rain of louis d'or would cease as suddenly as it began, if the girl were driven away.

"I meant no harm indeed," said she quite civilly; and with no small amount of cleverness diverted the girl's thoughts. "But you know what kind of place it is where you will be going to live?"

Madeloun looked at her, for a moment in doubt. Then she said proudly: "I do not see that it matters in the least."

"Oh, very well." Emilio's shrug as she turned away raised more anxiety in Madeloun's soul than the girl would confess to herself. "Come in to your coffee," called Emilio from the doorway.

But Madeloun waited yet a little by the wall, with busy mind. It seemed, then, that her hero of a day, who had so proudly likened himself to the golden hawk that flies straight into the sun of his desire — that her man was not

THE GOLDEN HAWK

so very different from the folk among whom she had lived at Castelar; that he, too, was bound to know struggle and to taste failure. But yet her heart leaped up in riot against her judgment — the dreary past was a dream, she was free, and this troubled present was bound by the very strength of her love to end in a golden future.

CHAPTER XXVIII

BREAKFAST AT THE PRESBYTERY

FATHER GOUGOULIN was not one to do without milk for his breakfast. In the seasons when this commodity was not to be had in the village, he had it brought daily from a distant *mas* or even from a village far away. A great jugful steamed tantalizingly in Trillon's nose as he stood in the dining-room of the presbytery, waiting for his Reverence to appear. To be sure, he had improvised a piteous sort of little *déjeuner* in his windmill, black coffee hastily warmed, and not hot enough, without milk or sugar, and with only a little stale bread. And he had been up all night, and had worked in the dawn, unharnessing his mule and carrying water and attending to the needs of his farmyard. And at the end of all that, he had had the long walk back to the village. Moreover, the table was laid temptingly with fresh butter and with the delicious twisted rolls that are called *jougasso*. It was no wonder that Trillon's mouth watered and that he forgot all sentimental needs in a raging desire that the priest should invite him to breakfast.

Father Gougoulin kept him waiting long; and at last ap-

THE GOLDEN HAWK

peared in leisurely fashion, unfolding his two days' old *Figaro*.

Trillon did not hesitate to open fire. "I'm hoping," said he, "that since your Reverence has sent for me, you will invite me to breakfast, for, indeed, I am a famished man!"

A moment Father Gougoulin gaped at the sheer impudence — so he considered it — of the remark. Then he laughed, and remembering that he was in debt for a luncheon of considerable expense, rang the bell for a second cup. Another factor in his complaisance was his own knowledge how he had outwitted the rascal by his telegram to the Mother Superior, the day before. He was prepared to be light and facetious; but he was not altogether free from a little uncertainty as to how it was best to treat the fellow. On the whole, he considered it wise to be as easy-going as possible.

"But I never turn the starving away hungry. I am surprised," he began genially, as he motioned Trillon to the place opposite him, "to see you so early this morning."

His voice grew abstracted as he talked, for he had caught sight of something interesting in his paper, as it appeared, and gave half an eye to it and the other to his *jougasso*. Between the two, his early guest had for the moment small attention. But Trillon was quite happy, pouring hot milk into his coffee and helping himself to butter. Moreover, when he had been advised of the sacerdotal visit the day before, he had put together Jaquelin's narrative and Madeloun's account of how she had been watched, and formed a shrewd notion of what Father

BREAKFAST AT THE PRESBYTERY

Gougoulin had been doing, and why he looked so pleased with himself. He anticipated the revelation of the truth; but for a while he was content to eat in silence, though his yellow eyes twinkled at the prospect of the fray before him.

So it happened that he was well on in the course of a comfortable meal before the priest remembered him, laid aside his *Figaro*, and dipping his *jougasso* up to the hilt in coffee — to him butter was no luxury, and he sometimes disliked it — signified his readiness to listen.

"Your Reverence," suggested Trillon, "this is amusing, seeing that you have sent for me; but I think we should both be more inclined, if we waited until the coffee had had time to take effect a little. And if you will permit, I have more of those excellent cigars which I trust your Reverence found safe upon your return home after our last meeting?"

Gougoulin nodded, by no means as ashamed as one might think, of his part in that little escapade.

"Still," said he, "we may as well begin now."

What Trillon would have said will never be known, for at that moment the priest's housekeeper laid before him a telegram that the postman had brought with the letters.

As he read it, his face lost all geniality. "You know something of this?" he asked, holding the paper up by one end.

Trillon did not try to read it.

"Yes," he said simply, "it was my doing; and I had decided to come to you even before I had your message, to ask you to give out the banns as soon as possible."

Father Gougoulin pushed away his second cup of coffee so violently that it made great brown splotches on

THE GOLDEN HAWK

the cloth; then he fell to pacing the room, dark red with anger that he tried in vain to control.

"Are you a devil?" he spluttered at last, "that you dare to ask my hospitality after — after —"

"And what are you," asked Trillon, as cool as the other was furious, "that you grant it after yesterday? But in the end, what harm is done by our eating together . . .?"

"Where is Madaleno?" interrupted the priest.

"She is in good hands," said Trillon easily.

"Where?" repeated the priest, like an angry bull.

Trillon rose: "Father Gougoulin, it's of no importance to me whether we have your consent to our wedding or not. What insuperable objection you have to her marrying me, I cannot understand. So far I have deferred to you from a fancy that she would be happier to feel that she had kept a promise that was demanded unfairly, if ever in the world. But it is unwise of you to go on in this fashion. Unless you are willing to come to terms, I shall take her where I please, and as I please — and be damned to you!" Something like this he said in its Provençal equivalent, cheerfully, his feet apart, and his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his baggy trousers.

"You threaten me?" The priest was almost inarticulate.

"That appears to be the case."

Father Gougoulin looked him over: "You rascal — you masquerader — you vagrant — you buffoon! You take a helpless girl out of a convent, in which she has been placed by her family and her priest, and you ask me to countenance such a proceeding? And without doubt you have scarcely a sou to your name!"

BREAKFAST AT THE PRESBYTERY

"On the contrary," said Trillon coolly, "I have still upwards of a hundred francs; and to-morrow I shall have more if I like."

"And you propose to live — how?" demanded the priest sharply.

"How?" said Trillon amiably, thinking that this savoured a little of compromise, if not of out-and-out yielding. "Oh, well, as you know, I have bought a farm —"

"A farm!" repeated the other, and could get out no more for scorn: "A farm!"

"You have seen it," observed Trillon calmly, "I understand. But in time it can be made to pay."

"And meanwhile —?"

"Meanwhile, we shall manage." He could not control a broad smile.

"It would be as well," said the priest impressively, "to throw the girl down from the high rock of Briazon, as they treated prisoners of war in the old days. But in truth, she shall go back to the convent —"

"As soon as you can lay hands on her?" supplemented Trillon.

He was not unprepared for a stream of denunciation, long and priestly; but he shook it off as a duck shakes off water.

"And you have the impudence to come to me —?" stammered the priest at last.

"*Bon-diéu!*" says Trillon. "I've got what I want. I come for your sanction — for the sanction of the Church — only to please Madeloun. You told her — foolishly,

THE GOLDEN HAWK

no doubt, if you wished to keep her a nun — that when I could farm the Pit of Artaban —”

The priest snorted.

“Wait till the spring,” said Trillon calmly. “A farm is not made in a minute. My luck will not desert me. You will see. I shall be rich yet from Artaban.”

“When you are,” said the priest, “when you are —”

“It’s a truce, then, is it?” asked Trillon.

“What do you mean?”

“Eh, well, am I to marry the girl out of hand — in Arles, perhaps? or am I to hold off a little longer on the chance —?”

“She is here?” the priest caught him up.

Trillon shrugged. “I have all respect for the Church, but I await my answer.”

Father Gougoulin considered, chin in hand: “Made-loun has been my charge from the day of her birth —”

“You talk,” says Trillon, “as if I contemplated making her a heretic or a Jew.”

“When you can keep her,” continued the priest, his temper now in hand.

“Eh, well — then?”

“Come to me and we will talk.”

An answer shot to Trillon’s lips, “Then let us talk now;” but he remembered somewhat uncomfortably that it would be difficult for him to point to visible means of support. “I must get on with the farm,” said he, with a twinkle. “And meanwhile —”

“Meanwhile?” — the ecclesiastic would not help him out.

BREAKFAST AT THE PRESBYTERY

"I suppose she must stay on at her brother's."

Father Gougoulin smiled faintly, but said nothing.

"Hah!" said Trillon. "You would be all against me, I know, village and priest together, with two or three rival suitors. Well, that is the fun of life. We shall see how far I am a match for you all — *tron-de-goi!* We call a truce? Or no, you do your worst. But I shall come back to you in a few weeks, when I have my house ready for the bride. You encourage me, father. I thank you for your good breakfast — *adessias!*"

He bowed himself out with theatrical politeness, and did not see the smile the priest shed upon his *Figaro*, as he murmured to himself: "I was a fool to send for him; but there are ways and ways of fighting —"

But if Trillon had heard, undoubtedly he would have answered with zeal: "No doubt!"

CHAPTER XXIX

MADELOUN DOUBTS

FROM the presbytery Trillon strolled through the village, by no means as down-hearted as he should have been, until he came to the *Cabro d'Or*, where he found Madeloun making a pathetic pretence at playing with her sister-in-law's children. Old Borel sat too on the terrace, vegetating in the sun, and now and again addressing a remark to the girl, but forgetting to listen to the answer.

To him came Trillon straight and put the question bluntly: "I am going to marry Madeloun before long. You give your consent? Yes?"

Auzias looked at him, mumbling the clove in his mouth. "Who are you?" he asked.

"I am your son-in-law," said Trillon, "and when we set up housekeeping, I and Madeloun, you shall come and live with us — eh?"

"Yes, yes," said Auzias, "yes." Then he added with amazing lucidity: "What does the curé say?"

"He says," answered Trillon, more for the daughter than for the father, "that when I am able to show a suffi-

MADELOUN DOUBTS

cient *rente*, then we can talk. Meanwhile, I have your permission — *hein?* It is as well."

He gave the old man no chance to deny, turning at once to the daughter: "It is good to see you in the old dress, Leleto. Come, now, we must have a talk, I and you; and you shall see what I have been doing on my land."

She rose at once to go with him, and they passed down the village street in silence, each as keenly aware of whispered comment from behind closed shutters and sun-screens, as they had been on that first day of his coming.

They found little to say, even when they had passed through the *Porte Horloge*, and were descending the mountain-track; but for their very lack of words, each thought the more deeply.

Madeloun stopped short at perceiving an inscription in red upon a big boulder overhanging their path, "THIS WAY TO MAS ARTABAN," and an arrow.

Then she sat down on the bank and laughed until she wept.

"You think you have only to call a thing by a name to make people believe!" she got out at last.

"It is one way," says Trillon, looking down at her, his hands in his pockets. "The countryman was made to regard his new boots as a brace of partridges. Do I or do I not look like a farmer? Give me your hand and we will go up."

But in some freakishness of spirit, she sprang away from him, and scrambled up without assistance.

Familiar as she was with the place, she gave a little cry of wonder to see how it was changed. The straggling

THE GOLDEN HAWK

uneven wall, which already had collapsed here and there into a mere rubble of stones, impressed her as an achievement in itself. She was astonished to see the colour of the good red earth among the boulders, and great dark patches where the furze had been burned away.

She turned to him with a surprised admiration in her eyes.

"Got on a little, have I?" he asked, not slow to drink in her approval. "Here we shall plant beans in the spring and a few potatoes. Yonder I shall set out a dozen olive-trees. For the almonds and the teazle and the vines, we must wait. Here, we shall keep the beasts and here the carts, here the sheep, and here we shall build an oven. The windmill — eh, well, that will make an excellent dove-cote one day when the house is finished."

He could hardly speak for the interruption of her bubbles of laughter, as she perceived the gory sign posts that labelled different parts of the estate.

"Well, what would you?" said he at last, rather nettled by her mirth.

"There never was anybody so mad as you, Trillon," she told him. "But where is the new house?"

He pointed to the primitive dwelling hewn in the rock. "With a front," said he, "and doors and windows, and partitions inside, we shall do better than most farmers."

"And who is to build it?" she would know.

"Who but myself?"

"And meanwhile —?"

"Meanwhile, I live here." He pushed aside the rude door he had managed to fashion and hang on his mill.

MADELOUN DOUBTS

She peeped within. The one room was dark and crowded with stores; but tidy enough, with the trimness of a ship's cabin.

When she came out, shading her eyes from the sudden dazzle of the sun, she asked prosaically:

"And while you do all this, where do you get your money?"

He was rather annoyed that she should so meddle in a matter that was not a woman's affair; and he told her so, somewhat bluntly.

She bit her lip, pouting at the rebuff, but still she showed a curious persistence: "I think I ought to know."

He changed his manner: "Can you not trust your hawk?"

"Even hawks must eat," said she.

"Eh, well —" he humoured her. "There is no lack of prey in the world."

She scarcely heard this, being all at once intent upon a new problem: "Where is your water?"

"I shall dig a well," said he, as one who had thought the matter out.

She looked at him doubtfully. He found everything so easy beforehand. Was he, after all, made up of words? Were his promises only breath? And what was his love? True, he had made some beginning. She could see that . . .

What she could not see — poor child! — being not expert in matters of land, was, how far he was from the stage of producing crops from this little tract of wilderness that he had bought so gaily. But she was very clear in

THE GOLDEN HAWK

her own mind that they must have some definite understanding before she could proceed a step further in the situation. She looked about for support, and at last sat down on a boulder that served Trillon in lieu of the stone bench that stands usually in front of farmhouse doors. From this vantage-point she looked at him and laid bare her mind.

"It is this way, Trillon," said she. "You have saved me from a living death, and I am more grateful to you than I can ever put into words. More than that, I am ready to marry you any day — only you know what stands between us. You say you can get over that, and when you do . . . But even then, to my mind, that is not all. Suppose we were free to marry to-morrow — what then? You gave me money — and perhaps I ought not to ask — to my shame I bring you nothing, not so much as one piece of linen, but that I cannot help . . . say what you will. You once told my mother you had no *rente* and — say what you will — I am uneasy. We cannot live as the birds do."

"Why not?" asked Trillon lightly; but his mind was running on the curious fact that for the moment the girl was arguing very much after the fashion of Father Gougoulin.

He walked away from her towards the edge of the cliff, with a sudden impulse to flight that should carry him out of all this bother. Inaccessible, behind convent walls, Madeloun had seemed so very desirable. Now that she was free and willing to be kissed when he pleased, she had lost a little of her charm. He feared his own temperament. South America — Africa — stretched out luring

MADELOUN DOUBTS

arms. And he could so easily be out of these toils into which he was stepping. On the one hand, he could not quite conceive himself tied to a domestic hearth, earning his daily bread after the fashion of the men in Castelar; on the other, there were women all over the world . . .

His gloomy reflections were cut short by Madeloun's pleading voice: "It is not that I dread being poor, Trillon. And I am willing to work — oh, until the ends of my fingers drop off! But it is that one must have something to build upon, you know — not a handful of gold one week and starvation the next."

She reasoned too damnably well, Trillon had to confess to himself, and she a woman who ought not to be meddling with such things at all! And she held him to the point so that he had a strong feeling of a noose held ready for his neck. And this he hated, as you may guess.

He had a conviction that the time for deserting the girl with any degree of credit was past; and, although the life of freedom — vagabondage — as it receded became infinitely desirable, even as Madeloun herself had been while she was safe in the convent, he put all thought of this away with a sigh, and prepared to consider how a decent, respectable home might be attained.

"Leave it to me," he said to her. "I will find a way."

When she looked round about her with a sudden gleam of half-apologetic laughter, he was angry again. Was he not doing all that any man could — more than any other man could? And the ungrateful huzzy had her fun out of the situation.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"Mind your sewing," he told her, with a touch of sharpness, "and when you are ready for the banns, I will not keep you waiting."

She looked at him, suddenly wistful again: "If you would only tell me how things stand? Perhaps I might help a little . . .?"

At this, he found occasion to laugh: "You? Help by keeping yourself out of the curé's hands. I ask no more."

He fell into consideration so deep that he did not hear her say: "I am going back now."

She waited, then she suddenly clasped her hands together and turned away, unhappy. Would all fulfilment of dreams be as little sweet as this? she asked herself.

She had nearly reached the edge of the slope, before he stirred himself and ran after her:

"*Hoi — Madeloun!*"

She would not turn for a reason that she had; but on the contrary quickened her pace and let herself run lightly down to the road.

There he speedily overtook her and caught her roughly in his arms. "What do you mean?" he asked in a passion.

She smiled at him from his shoulder, and when she saw the answering leap of light in his yellow eyes, as he kissed her again and again: "I wanted to see whether you loved me still. I think that unless I find a way, you will not love me long."

"How? how that?" he spluttered. "Unless you find a way?"

"Yes," said she, still sadly. "Oh, you are quick and you are strong; but you are not of the world that I know

MADELOUN DOUBTS

at Castelar; and it may be that you will not be true to me. But if ever you grow indifferent, I tell you now, it is I that will cast you off."

Africa and South America lost their charms over against the sweetness of Madeloun's lips.

"Eh, well," said the hawk, "you shall find a way if you can; but I think instead that we shall find some way together."

She was not wholly convinced, but whispered still: "I wonder. But I shall pray every night to Our Lady, and perhaps . . ."

CHAPTER XXX

A CURIOUS END TO AN ODD CHAPTER

BUT several days came and went, and nothing of import happened.

Madeloun journeyed to Arles and returned with a modest household provision, far less than would have been hers long years before, had her parents intended that she should marry. For herself she bought little, her shame being real that Trillon should have to pay for these things, even before she took his name.

The night of her return, he came to her as she sat very tired in her garden. For a few moments they were silent, watching a group of quarrymen on the homeward road. A snatch of song floated up:

"Sènso amor la vido es crudèlo."

And Madeloun, who knew the man, had a momentary picture of his home: a courtyard littered over with fowls and children; wine and bean-salad on the stone table under the vine-arbour; the wife milking the goat for the baby's supper. She had a sudden despair that she should never know this life of happy toil in the sunshine. To marry a quarryman — yes, that was one thing; but to

A CURIOUS END TO AN ODD CHAPTER

marry one who was stung as if with a poison, so that it was in his blood to rove.

"If you were to try that?" she suggested timidly. "Go to the quarry of Sant Pau and ask for work. They always need men there. And we should have more than twenty francs a week. It is nothing to be poor if one knows where the next meal is to come from."

He looked at her sharply, then laughed, but said nothing.

Sudden passion stirred in her eyes. "I shall turn goat soon" — which in Provençal threatened him with speedy loss of patience. "But will nothing move you to common sense?"

"Listen, Leleto" — he was perfectly good-natured. "My mind also has been running quarryward. I have been thinking that I might go and strike a bargain for some stones and build up the old house for us two immediately. I cannot take you to live in a windmill."

"To build up the house — yes," she said shrewdly. "But how fill the pot?"

"Why worry about the pot," he insinuated, "when you are going to have me?"

"I could not make broth of you" — she half yielded to his coaxing.

"Eh, well, but we have a few sheep and fowls; and did you ever know a time when I could not get more when I wanted it?"

"I do not know you very well," she admonished him. "But you said you had no *rente*, and how one should live on land that bears nothing —?"

"You are practical, Madeloun," said he, with a change

THE GOLDEN HAWK

of mood. "But if you will not take the chances with me, you have only to throw me over."

"What, then?" says she.

"Then" — he meditated a while — "I should have my choice between Jano-Marlo and the long white road."

This she considered too much for a girl of any pride. "Take Jano-Marlo, then," said she, and tried to pass him to go into the house.

He barred her way: "To be honest, I prefer the road. But look you now, Leleto, if I give up my roaming on your account, can you not be content to share with me a free life in the sun and the wind?"

She looked at him, uncomprehending. It is difficult to instil the spirit of adventure into the hedge-bird.

"Ah, no," he answered himself suddenly, "you like a house with curtains."

And still she was silent, grieved and obstinate, and not knowing how to urge her point.

"Well, and you shall have your curtains, if they would make you happy. But how can you expect to keep me long within?"

She did not answer that, her mind still bent on the one thing. "You will not turn quarryman," she said at last, "because you fear the work."

He laughed, not without vexation: "And yet I have worked these last weeks. How much land have I cleared? how much wall have I built? Even while you were away at Arles, I spent hours in the old rock-house planning how it might best be turned into a dwelling. And all this, to

A CURIOUS END TO AN ODD CHAPTER

say nothing of the care of the animals, the carrying of water . . . What would you?"

"There, again," she complained, "I am only a silly girl, but I know you cannot have a farm without water."

"We must dig until we find water," said Trillon patiently.

"Then dig!" she cried, with passion. "And when you have found it, come to me again!"

"You talk like the priest," said he. "Really, it is enough to make a man —"

"What, then?" she asked; but he would not conclude his sentence.

The silence had become awkward when she spoke again. "It is one of three things. Either you tell me what money you have that we must live upon, or you follow my plan of taking work at the quarry, or —"

She hesitated to pronounce the conclusion.

"Or you throw me over?" said he.

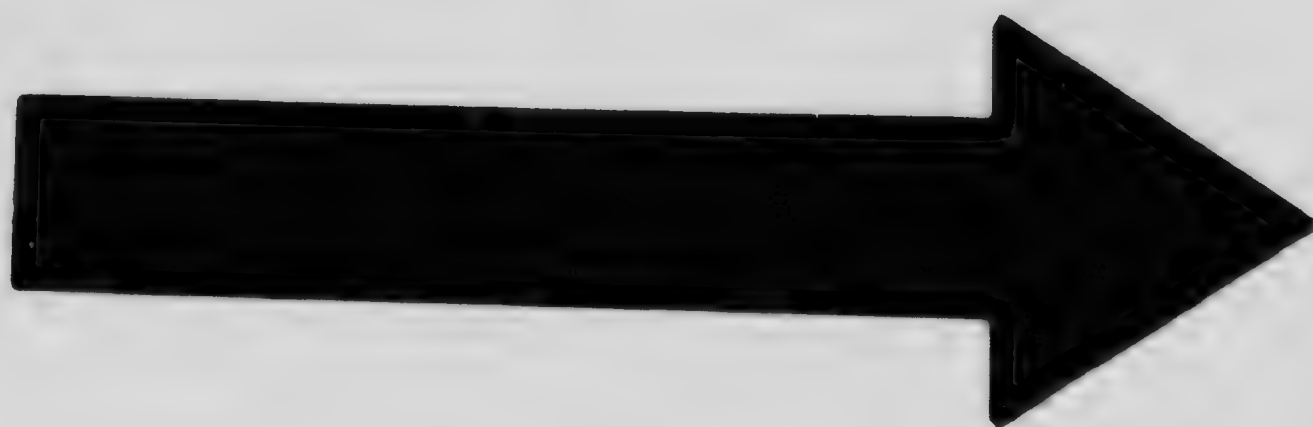
"Or you must find some other way," she said.

"I don't like to be threatened," said Trillon, "but it is quite likely that I shall find some other way."

He turned as if to go, but she flung herself upon him and clung very sweetly: "Don't be angry with me. It is only — that I cannot understand —"

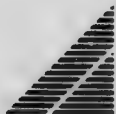
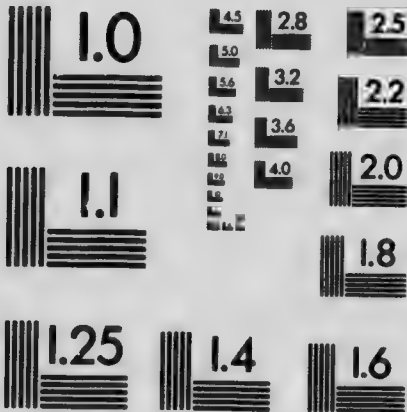
"Yes," he said gently, trying to put her aside, "it is that. You cannot understand. But without doubt I shall find a way."

The quarrymen were close under the wall now, and the one that was singing had a merry note of a "sweet little, pretty little olive-plucker," and as his footsteps died



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THE GOLDEN HAWK

away he had yet another song to warn his wife of his coming:

"Nanoun, vaqui lou soulèu."

But poor Madeloun was wretched because her man was out of temper with her.

He held her at arm's length as he said: "If you will know how much money I have in the world, it is less than a hundred francs together; and as I will not go saw stones at another man's bidding—" He changed his sentence abruptly: "Do you see me, my girl, brought down to that, tied by the leg week in, week out, in order to earn a few pitiful francs? It would be more profitable to take to stealing—"

"You would not!" she interrupted, breathless.

"Why not?" — he spoke with the utmost coolness.

"Better men have gone that way before me."

She turned away, wondering if she had ever understood him the least bit in the world.

"If wives cannot endure beggary, they must take what they get," said he. "However, you can always be rid of me. That would be no difficult matter. Only" — he seemed to be thinking aloud — "that I have sworn to put the thing through —"

It seemed to her that all her blood flew into her head, in the swift passion of the South: "But not if I refuse!" she cried, with her little fists clenched and beating each other. "Will you turn quarryman?"

"No," says he calmly. "Curse or no curse, will you let me have the banns cried in Arles to-morrow?"

"No!" — she fairly stuttered with anger. "No — no — no — no — no! Never!"

A CURIOUS END TO AN ODD CHAPTER

The garden was so dusky by this time that neither could see the other's face.

"Then good-night," was his last word.

She let him go — would not so much as answer. At the door into the terrace, he turned and looked back — with what expression, she could not tell. She heard him exchange a few words with her father and Jósè, then by the silence she knew that he was gone.

"He is a devil!" she whispered to herself, her fists still clenched in anger. "It is as I thought in the beginning. And I am without help. He will not work like other men — and what are we to do . . . ? For when he comes back to-morrow, if he asks again that he should let the banns be cried — I do not know — I might have to give in . . . There is no standing long against him . . . He flies to his end through everything . . . over all things. . . . And I am without help."

Meanwhile, Trillon had strolled out into the village street, his hands in his pockets, his head sunk on his chest, with all the air of a man who did not notice particularly where he was going. I cannot myself understand how such a thing could happen; but certain it is that instead of turning to the left for the *Porte Horloge* and the homeward way, he bent to the right towards the *Porte Murette* and the road that goes out into the world. Therefore, instead of the rough track among the olive-groves, he had first the cobbles of the Roman road, which ought to have broken into his numbness of mind, but did not, and afterwards the dusty highway.

When he reached the foot of the hill and began to feel

THE GOLDEN HAWK

the plain beneath his feet, even then he might have turned at right angles to his course, and stumbled his way over meadows and between trees until he reached the base of his headland. But an hour after he had left the garden, he was walking along the dusty road; and two hours later, he was still facing the same way and a long distance from Castelar. It seemed as if he lacked the will-power to turn, as if, like a wax automaton, he would go on and on, forever and forever, until he reached some insuperable barrier that should stir him out of his dream.

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CHAPTER XXXI

THE NEWS THAT RAMOUN BROUGHT

THE next morning, when Madeloun came downstairs, a little late after a wakeful night, she found the shepherd Ramoun drinking coffee on the terrace.

She was not unaware of a slight gleam of interest in Trillon's rival; and as for Ramoun, he showed all his white teeth as soon as he perceived her.

"*Hoi*," said he. "I suppose I am the first. I had the curiosity to come and ask you. Where's your man?"

She went rather pale: "What do you mean?"

"He is not at the place he calls his farm," said Ramoun. "I passed by early this morning, and heard one of his sheep making such a disturbance that I had a mind to go and see what it was. I called at first and shouted; but had no word of reply. So I climbed up and found the windmill shut, and one of the sheep mightily caught between two boulders and half skinned. So I got the creature loose, but whether it would die of its struggles and its injuries and its fright, I cannot say. They were hungry, all of them, sheep and fowls and mule, so when I had shaken off that devil of a yellow dog, I looked about for something to

THE GOLDEN HAWK

feed them; but when I saw the bed had not been slept in, I thought you ought to know. I came away and left them hungry, little as I liked it. Where is your man — *hein?*”

Madeloun had grown as white as the piece of linen in her hand: “Something has happened to him. He has gone over the cliff . . .”

“Not he,” said Ramoun. “I had a look. Oh, he’s safe enough. What could happen?”

“Yes, what could happen?” — Madeloun defied him.

“Eh, well, he has deserted you, my girl,” said Ramoun brutally, “and that’s what could happen. I never believed much in your foreign birds of fine feather. He has gone back where he came from. And what now — *hein?*”

She dropped upon the stone bench by the shepherd’s side, and her work fell unheeded to the ground. But, after a time, her spirit rose in such defence as she could find.

“Whatever it is, I shall know soon. He will send me word. It must be something important that took him away, unless, indeed” — her eyes grew dark with sudden fear — “you have murdered him, some of you, and hidden his body . . .”

Ramoun interrupted with a great laugh — a laugh too sonorous for his small frame: “That does not happen here, Leloun, my girl. Only at election-time we take to knives or chairs, but that is all in the open — *hein?*”

But she did not hear this, wringing her hands still with fear, and gasping under her breath: “What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?”

THE NEWS THAT RAMOUN BROUGHT

"If I may be so bold," said Ramoun, leaning towards her. "Give me leave to feed those beasts and —"

"No, I will do that. That is mine to do," she caught him up quickly.

He shrugged: "Well, at least, do not give your man too much grace. Take up with a better fellow, and one who has wanted you all his life. Till that foreigner came, Madeloun —"

"Don't bother me," she cut short his pleading. "Cannot you see that I am in trouble?"

"If you look at it that way," he muttered, now sulky, "you can only wait — wait until his lordship is pleased to come back and claim you again. And whether that will be one year or twenty, who can tell?"

"Hsh!" said she. "I must think."

And when he had been silent a little while: "Go away — I cannot think while you are here."

But Ramoun did not move.

"Look you now, Madeloun," he urged. "It would be a sufficient jest on your mighty man who leaves you so easily, if you were to get married while he is away. And I have good living wages and could make you as comfortable as any woman in the village. And all the trouble would be settled and done with."

He had touched three chords there that appealed to her strongly. For a second, her black eyes snapped at the possibility of paying out the man who had won her the first day without difficulty, and now felt free to treat her as he pleased, and to leave her when he liked. Then she remembered what he was, and

THE GOLDEN HAWK

said faintly: "You would have to reckon with him afterwards."

"And if I had?" demanded Ramoun, having apparently forgotten the episode of the cup of milk. He added confidently: "He will never come back."

"And you do not even know," said Madeloun, now scornful, "that he has gone away!" Her first fear, born of their difference of opinion, the night before, had given way to a full return of confidence.

"Know?" repeated Ramoun. Then he laughed: "Meanwhile, the animals are hungry."

"I will feed them," she began, then bit her lip, remembering that she had spent all the money Trillon had given her and had nothing else.

It was as if Ramoun guessed the difficulty. "You see," he said, "undoubtedly the man would have food stored away in his mill, but it is not for me to search there. I might have stolen everything he has and serve him right; but we in Castelar are honest folk."

Yet his words suggested to the girl a solution, although she decided that he was not the man to carry it into effect.

"Ramoun," she said, "if you are my friend now, and if you go away and act with discretion, I shall be grateful and remember it after."

He read more meaning into her words than perhaps she intended; and yet I am not sure that she did not, in the exigency of the moment, consent to his wilful misinterpretation.

"But how long," said he, "will you give the adventurer?"

THE NEWS THAT RAMOUN BROUGHT

"Not too long," she answered, and he read a threat against Trillon in her tone.

"And if I go away now —?"

"We can talk later," said she, with a smile, "although there is still Father Gougoulin, and there will be difficulties —"

He was content with what he had gained, and was afraid of spoiling the good effect of his visit, so departed, saying only: "I shall come back in a week." And to this she assented.

For a few moments, her desolation returned, and she lashed her brain with vain speculations as to what had happened. The significant thing was that he had disappeared without a word.

But presently she laid her work aside and went to her father. It was clear to her that her immediate duty was to care for the suffering animals.

She found Auzias alone, for Jôusè had gone to Paradou for stores, Emilio was in the fields gathering mulberry-leaves for the silk-worms, and the children were scattered, playing up and down the village street.

Auzias was standing just outside the sun-screen, with an air of wondering what to do with himself.

"Will you walk with me this way a little, my father?" asked Madeloun; and he was rather pleased and flattered that she took so much notice of him. He hobbled with her as briskly as he might, without asking questions; and she for her part was silent until they had passed the Porte Horloge. She was trying to realize what would be her position if Trillon had indeed gone away never to return.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

The three points that loomed most sharply before her were that she could not continue on at the *Cabro d'Or*, that her position in the village would be humiliating if not unendurable, and that wherever she was, unless she could make up her mind to return to the convent, whither her priest drove her, she must either marry Ramoun — and there was also a dim figure of Pèire in her mental background — or find work that would bring her the needs of life. To marry anyone — that meant further conflict with the curé. And if Trillon came back — ah, come back he would! — she would like to punish him a little, but not beyond hope.

She put aside consideration for the moment, and told Auzias their errand. He shrank back, alarmed at the idea of breaking into anybody's house. And as she could not, for pride or some other reason, explain to him the exact state of affairs, she made it important that he had been suddenly called away on some matter, and that the responsibility fell upon her, as his promised wife, to care for his property. It would never do to leave it unprotected to tempt the village. Auzias still mumbled and shook his head as with trembling hands he opened the door that Ramoun had shut as he had found it. Madeloun, watching him from the boulder that served as bench, wondered that she had not undertaken the business alone, and then realized that the presence of both lent it a certain countenance and publicity. She left her father to hunt out the food that must supplement the scanty out-door diet of Artaban, and herself took the water-cans to the source where it ran in to the aqueduct.

THE NEWS THAT RAMOUN BROUGHT

While she was returning, sadly bent under the weight of her load, she elaborated the plan of what she must do. She dropped breathless on the turf and left the old man to pour water into the troughs. When he came back to her, she was ready: "My father, how if you and I should come here to live while the master is away? We could keep things safe."

He ruminated a while over this, then: "And what would they say in the village?"

"Let them talk!" she cried savagely.

He seemed to try to think, to piece out several things, but presently gave up the process: "But why should we come?"

"Eh, well, for the animals, if for nothing else. It is too long a walk for each day."

"And then?" said Auzias. It seemed as if the momentary responsibility drew out a little of his old self.

"And then," said Madeloun, "well, then! Emilio would not be sorry to be rid of us; two less mouths to feed."

"And how should we live?" asked Auzias again.

"Not that we should touch anything here!" said Madeloun hotly. "He shall find it all as he left it, except what we give to the animals. I could work — oh, I could sew. I could find many things to do."

She looked at the windmill with its tremendous cliff background; at the far plain smoky with heat, as if some strange slow combustion were taking place among the marshes. For a moment, the tang of the wild life entered into her; and she was then more nearly in sympathy with

THE GOLDEN HAWK

Trillions's love of the open than ever before. "We could manage very well," she said, "until he returns. And that will not be long. Before the flocks come down from the mountains — you will see."

He tried to judge for her — the poor old man! — but his brain was flabby.

"Wait a week," was all he could find to say. "You could come every day for a week?"

She pondered this advice. At the end of a week, Trillon might return; Ramoun would certainly come. There was time then perhaps to make up her mind.

"But," says she, "the door?"

He propped it up as well as he could; and when he had succeeded to his own satisfaction, she admitted that his opinion was not without force. "We are honest folk here," said he.

"I will wait a week," she said, "but at the end of that time — Sweet Virgin, what will become of me?"

CHAPTER XXXII

MADNESS AT THE WINDMILL

BUT at the end of a week what does become of us? However much we think in the stern tragedy of youth that a time is impassable, we are presently over its borders and viewing another week of fresh difficulty.

The days went on and Madeloun was still at the *Cabro d'Or*, wondering why she lived, yet eating her beans and drinking her black coffee, only with less gusto than if Trillon had been there. She was very uncomfortable and worried, but she was not without hope. Almost the worst of her situation was the noise of wagging tongues that was reflected to her through the ears of her relations. And whenever she set out, as she did twice a day, in her self-imposed task of caring for Trillon's animals, she was liable to village encounters. Once, near the end of the time she had mentioned, it was Zouè. "So your man has left you again — *hein?* Well, be thankful; girls have suffered worse and got over it. It is a common lot. Take up with one of the village lads again — Ramoun — *hein?* There are plenty with good looks and money enough to keep you. Laugh and let him go."

THE GOLDEN HAWK

Madeloun pulled her arm away from the palsied touch. "You want to talk," said she bitterly. "Well, go then and tell everybody that I shall live in the windmill at Artaban — I and my father — there!"

Certainly, she provided all the country round with the spice of gossip; but her own public statement served only to strengthen her in her purpose. Ramoun came Sunday evening in new clothes, and was sent sharply away.

Then, Madeloun, having put aside this temptation to punish her fugitive lover, and feeling virtuous in self-sacrifice, urged Jousè to help her make the windmill habitable for the old man and herself. It was only the question, she said, of a little partition to make two rooms out of one, and something to sleep on.

"And you will eat — what?" asked Jousè.

"I can sew. I had to sew in the convent," she said, with stinging cheeks, "and I will ask people to let me have work. It will save them the long walk all the way to Paradou."

Perhaps if Jousè had realized how bitter to her was the bread of this humiliation, he would have spared her; but with the memory of his wife's taunts and complaints fresh in his mind, he decided that the girl was taking a most sensible course, and agreed to help her all he could.

On the following day, the removal took place, and furnished the little town with more delicious matter for mouthing. There were some that blamed Jousè; but more that regarded the undertaking as another freak of a girl who was too mad even to stay in a convent when she was put there.

MADNESS AT THE WINDMILL

But before they had half concluded with this topic she came to them, going from house to house, and asked for work. The schoolmistress headed the way by giving her a cotton blouse to make, then a farmer's daughter who longed for finery and offered less money than she would have to give at Paradou. Altogether, Madeloun went home in a curious mixture of rage at the sympathy she had evoked, and pride at the work and promises of work that she had succeeded in collecting.

By Tuesday afternoon she and the old man were settled in their strange, new home, she had begun her first sewing, and Auzias was delightedly pottering about, collecting dead olive-wood where he had permission, fetching water and caring for the beasts.

When Jousè was ready to return to Castelar, after unharnessing the mule, which had been used to transfer the few household goods, and helping in other ways as far as was consistent with his dignity, he said rather awkwardly: "I have left you wine and olives and potatoes, and you can always come in and get bread." I am not aware whether you know that Jousè, in addition to the inn and the olive-mill, had also inherited his father's function of baker to the community?

"Yes," said Madeloun staidly, "and I shall make dresses for the children in return." She was determined to be beholden to her family as little as possible.

"And when the cold weather comes —?" he hinted.

"By that time," said Madeloun bravely, "— long before, Trillon will have returned, and we shall be married, without doubt. If not" — she hesitated — "if any-

THE GOLDEN HAWK

thing should happen, we shall find a place, I and my father."

"The animals here would have to be sold," mused Jousè, "and whose the money would be, I don't know. It is likely that the Commune would give it to you. You could always come back to us, you know," he concluded half-heartedly.

She shut her lips fast: "There is also the convent."

Jousè shrugged and strolled home, without further argument; and the girl and the old man were left to begin their solitary life by the Pit of Artaban.

Madeloun was amazed to find how quickly, for all her trouble, she began to like it. The delicious air of early summer, the sweet open view, the friendly animals, her skill in her own dainty hand-work, even the roughness of the gypsy accommodation, the unprotected fire, the scarcity of utensils and house comforts — all brought her a sense of freedom and joy, and contributed to her sure hope that Trillon would come back and explain his absence. But for the necessities of her work, which required her to go to the village and accept the well-meant commiseration of her neighbours, she would have been not so ill-content. And certainly she had to thank the convent for this, that as the result of her disciplinary labours there, she was now able to hear the occasional clink of her own silver in her hand.

The old man too revived when free from the oppression of his daughter-in-law. He was able to do a fair share of work, and even hung a basket on his arm and relieved Madeloun, for the most part, of the village shopping.

MADNESS AT THE WINDMILL

So the days slipped into weeks, and Madeloun ceased to speak openly of the time when Trillon should return; but she must have had still some hope that this strange present would vanish in a blaze of excitement, such as he had always brought before, to keep her endurance alive.

The first visitor that she had, before even Emilio trailed out to the Pit, with her children hanging to her skirts, was Father Gougoulin.

By due questioning of his housekeeper, he had kept himself informed of the situation; and he had not been slow to chuckle to himself over its oddities.

He bided his time, however; but presently came, on a windy day, when the mistral, battling with the fierce heat, made walking just possible.

Madeloun was sitting alone with her work, just within the windmill door, when his bloated dark face, dropping sweat, came into her patch of shade.

"Eh, well," he said. "How now?" And he dropped, puffing hard, upon a boulder.

"Well, my father," said she, and continued demurely with her stitching.

"Not broken-hearted — *hein?*" He studied her shrewdly.

"Am I so badly off?" she asked, with a touch of defiance.

He looked about him: "In the beginning, it was a jest, but in time a jest ceases to be amusing. How long will you go on this way?"

"Until the winter," she answered promptly. "Before the winter I shall be married, or else —"

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"Or else?" — he watched her.

"Or else, my father must go back to the inn, and I — I must choose between earning my own living out in the world, and — the convent. I do not know" — she said impulsively — "if I am left — alone — I think I would go back, if the Sisters would take me."

"Ah — ah," said Father Gougoulin. He scrubbed his chin, looked across the plain and sighed. "Everything points to that," he said presently.

"Are you so sure, my father?" Madeloun dimpled a little. "I am not so sure myself."

"Have you not had enough of trouble out in the world?"

"Almost," she said. "Almost. But I must wait a little longer."

"Ah," said he, "you will be of my mind yet."

She looked at him, with sudden contradiction in her spirit. He was so sure of his case that he stirred up rebellious thoughts; but she kept them to herself.

When they had talked a little longer and he rose to go, he briefly urged her to come to Confession and Mass, and left her without much argument. He fancied that he could see the progress of events along the line that he desired; but he wondered heavily, as he plodded homeward, how far the attainment of his purpose would bring him peace. But whether or not, he was bound fast, by the superstition of a vow, to do his utmost.

Madeloun left alone fell into greater depression than she had before known since she went to the windmill. It seemed to her then that all roads led to the convent door. She pictured herself back within the walls at Sant Alàri,

MADNESS AT THE WINDMILL

and Trillon returning, perhaps rich this time and independent. Even if she had taken the vows, she could not feel sure that he would not have her out again. It would be no punishment to him to find her there; and she longed to punish him for his presumption. On the other hand, if he came back and found her married, that would be a worthy vengeance indeed. And if he never came back? Well, even in that case, she would have a husband and a home, and would make the best of them as most women do . . .

Towards sunset that evening, when she was still in this mood, and while her father was away fetching water, Pèire, the quarryman, stepped over the wall and came up to her, as she stooped to hang the pot over the smoky fire.

He found an immediate excuse for helping; and when the matter had been adjusted, without asking permission, he lounged upon a boulder not far from the one to which she had returned with her sewing.

"Do you know what they say of you up-there, Madeloun?" he began, without preamble.

"That I am as mad as Trillon?" said she. "Did you walk all this way to tell me that?"

"But no," he answered simply. "I came to say that I am not of their opinion, and to suggest something . . ."

She raised her eyes from her work and looked at him attentively. Certainly, he was very different from Ramoun, the shepherd; taller, more bony, not so dark and monkey-like, with big sunburned features that passed for good-looking in the village, and with steady blue eyes — an inheritance from some remote ancestor of the North.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

He seemed, she thought, a man of kind heart, and rumour had it that he was considerate with his widowed mother.

"What then?" she asked, returning to her work.

"We must think of the winter," he began, with obvious embarrassment. "The winter will be upon us, and this is no fit place for you. You should have a house of your own."

She flushed with anger, and a sharp retort rose to her lips; but he looked so simple and well-meaning that she lacked heart to bring it out. "What would you?" she asked, after a pause.

"Eh, well, Madeloun, you know in your heart what I have been thinking these many years, though I don't urge that upon you now. Still, the old woman would give you a kind welcome . . ."

"And my father?" asked the girl, her heart beating thickly. It seemed to her then that she had always liked Pèire better than Ramoun. How could she ever for a moment have contemplated the little fellow?

"Eh, well," said Pèire, "if a man must take the one with the other —"

Madeloun shrugged with sudden impatience: "But you said you did not come for that?"

"That was only in case you would not give me a hearing," he confessed.

She had to laugh a little then. To be sure, she meant to be faithful to Trillon, little as he deserved it, to the last day of endurance. Still, in the meantime — she checked her thought, not wishing to admit to herself what it was that she found pleasant in the situation.

MADNESS AT THE WINDMILL

"You know, Pèire," said she gently, "that I am betrothed and that I cannot listen to such talk."

"Eh, well," said Pèire, "but you can listen to this then. What I think of your man is neither here nor there; whether he is likely to come back is neither here nor there. In the winter you must have a warm and comfortable place to live in. If I should build up for you the old house in the rock — *hein?*"

An impulsive refusal rose to Madeloun's lips; then she put down her work, laid her finger against her lip and considered. "Why should you?" she asked, after a time.

He shrugged but made no answer.

"And the stones?"

"I can cut stones enough up above in the quarry — not so good — yet good enough."

"But even so, how could I pay you for the work?" Yet her imagination tingled at the thought of receiving Trillon in a two-roomed — perhaps a four-roomed house — on his own land. It would be a punishment by coals of fire — sweeter than any other vengeance that she could devise, she thought.

"Well," said he, "you shall pay me later, as you can. Meantime, you would be comfortable. Come, now — let us look at the place."

So far she consented; and when they stood before it, he told her how many stones would be required, and how much lime for mortar. He said that he was mason enough to build a wall with a plumb line, and that window-frames could be bought, and a door, in Mausanne, and hauled with this very mule and cart. And as for the upper

THE GOLDEN HAWK

floors, they could be added later; for the time the ground rock would serve very well. To be sure, he might need help at putting in the windows and the doors, but he thought that might easily be arranged with the village carpenter. And further, as he would have to do his building altogether between supper and dusk, and on Sundays when his own quarry was closed, it was none too soon to begin if the place was to be habitable by winter.

Madeloun listened and pondered, but could not see her way. "Yet," said she, at last, "when he comes back he would be glad to have it done; and he will probably bring money with him, only —"

Père turned his back upon her and pretended to examine the trunk of a fig-tree that grew close to the wall: "Only," says he, in a hoarse voice, "you can leave us to settle that affair — if ever he comes back."

She had no knowledge of any grudge between them; and therefore she did not understand the smile with which he turned to her at length. He was wondering what she would say if she knew that her man had been willing to stake her on a throw of the dice; but he judged it better, for the furtherance of his plan, to keep this secret for a while.

Well, Madeloun knew, of course, that she was incurring a heavy obligation; but somehow, even her brief association with Trillon inclined her to the risk. The idea was too sweet to be abandoned over-hastily. If Trillon came back and found a home ready prepared by the bride whom he had judged so useless as a helpmeet, who knew —?

MADNESS AT THE WINDMILL

"Père," she said, "do you understand that I fully expect him to return before the winter? And if then we should be married and live in the house that you have built —?"

"I thought," said Père, "that you did not know where he went or why, nor when, if ever, he would come back? So the talk goes in the village."

She bit her lip, but honesty compelled her: "And so it is. And yet I understand him — as far as may be — and they do not. It is his way to go and come suddenly. Without doubt, he will return just when you have finished your work and when you are thinking —"

"Well," said Père, "thinking what?"

She blushed, unable to put into words the reward at which, she could see plainly, he was aiming. But, after all, she told herself, if he understood that she was using him only as a means, then he was free to decline; and the disappointment, if he persisted, would be of his own fault.

"Let us go down," she said. "I can see my father returning, and he will be wanting his supper."

Père lingered yet a moment, and she waited with him to hear what he might say.

"I take my chance" — he spoke after a time. "And if he comes back — eh, well, we can see about payment then."

There was a certain threat in his words that troubled her for a moment; but she soon forgot it in the excitement of the plan.

CHAPTER XXXIII

LITTLE GAMES OF LOVE

IN Castelar, it was soon pronounced a scandal. The old women declared on the best authority that there was a double wooing, under their very eyes, of a girl already affianced to a third man. For a time, the tide of indignation against the light-headedness of Madeloun was tinged with sympathy for the absent lover, who after all might return. Perhaps he had only gone away to earn some money for the huzzy? In consequence of the rumours that flew about, some of the women even talked of withdrawing their newly granted custom; but Madeloun had learned her convent lessons well, and they found it a great relief not to be obliged to walk to Paradou for every stitch that they lacked time or skill to make for themselves.

It was undoubtedly the case, however, they whispered together, that Pèire now, instead of going home from his work, went straight to the Pit of Artaban, and took to sawing stones there, high up in the quarry. And somebody had seen Madeloun carrying him his supper, so that he might work almost while he ate; and after a few days of this, the report went about that he had devised panniers

LITTLE GAMES OF LOVE

for the mule, filled them with stones, balanced them on each side, and so led the animal down before the ancient rock-house. He was known to have hauled lime and sand from Paradou; and presently, as the story went, he cut and carried only a few stones each night, and began slowly to build up a front wall from the heap that he had. He began at a time when he could continue late, because of the full moon, but afterwards, somebody who had spied — I am not sure that it was not Jaquelin, the acolyte, or his father — said that he worked by the aid of a lantern and several candles thrust into bottles. "Heaven save us!" said the village. "If an honest, sober lad like Pèire can get into such a state, what are we coming to?" But there was laughter as well, for the situation was droll.

Perhaps the best of the joke was when the amateur mason tore off a finger-nail and the wound became a little poisoned and he had to walk miles to the doctor to have the hand treated. It was said that Madeloun had offered her man's mule and *charrette*, and when Pèire would not take them, had wept and used bitter words. All Castelar looked then to see his folly stop; but after a short interruption, it went on as before. St. John's Day came and passed, and the harvest was brought in with song and dance; but Pèire piled up stones throughout the fête, and Madeloun, who was famous for her grace in the *rondo* and the *jarandoulo*, took no part.

But yet it must have been the sense of the village disapproval that kept her aloof. She did not have at all the look of the maiden forlorn when she brought her work to her patrons, and took away in return silver francs. She

THE GOLDEN HAWK

was positively haughty in her demeanour; and it was much held against her that she never crossed the threshold of her brother's house. Her neglect was not condoned even when she now and again spent a few sous on sugar-work for her nephews and nieces; and the fact that she kept her father comfortably in tobacco was balanced by her occasional purchase of a ribbon or an apron for herself . . . Castlar would not forgive her until it knew why Pèire was building up the old house. If she was going to marry him, that was bad and bad enough; if not, it was worse.

Then there was the shepherd Ramoun. Who told of the cups of milk that he left surreptitiously on the boulder at Madeloun's door? Who told of the neat little piles of cheeses that his sister had made with her own hands, by no means to be distributed in this unprofitable fashion? Who told even of a toothsome joint of mutton that mysteriously disappeared out of the anatomy of one of his sheep, and was afterwards smelled in the pot by somebody passing along the mountain-track under the hill, on the way home from the vineyards in the plain?

I cannot defend Madeloun from the charge of receiving these gifts. I am forced to conclude that she believed her soul to be at together in such a perilous way, after she had added to her sins of convent-breaking and persistent rebellion against her priest, the further incubus of Pèire's mistaken labour, that she might as well go the whole length of iniquity and pay afterwards. In no other way can I explain the curiosity of her actions.

As the weeks lengthened into months, and Trillon did

LITTLE GAMES OF LOVE

not reappear, she was indeed miserable; but she knew that she ought to have been more miserable than she was. Sometimes, she had to sit down and think hard before she could wring out any tears; but again, hurt pride and humiliation stung until weeping was an easy matter. In the long run, day after day, what with house-building and a stream of surprises in the way of presents, and two of the handsomest lads of the village at her beck and delightfully fierce with each other, she could not find life too dull. She had put aside her wedding sheets, when she began to sew for other people; but she remembered them now and again, and wondered if she should have use for them after all. But sometimes it flashed across her that they had been bought with poor Trillon's money, and what she should do with them, she could not tell. She wept then over her own unhappiness.

After such a process, she was usually refreshed to play off the two youths against each other more vigorously than before. Her great comfort was that they were two. And if you say she was a huzzy, I may not deny what I deplore; but she was as God made her, or, if you like, her Græco-Romano-Ligurian ancestors and the sun of the Midi.

One Sunday in August, when the lower windows had been set into the house and the stones had crawled up almost enough to enclose them, Pèire did not come until evening; and then he brought a beautiful brooch of gold filigree, which he confessed he had gone to Arles to buy.

When Madeloun took fright and would not have it, he made a show of indignation: "Why not? It is bought. Would you waste the money? It is not a ring. It doesn't

THE GOLDEN HAWK

bind you to anything. And if you can swallow a house" — he was brutal, but he carried his point. And was he simple, this Pèire, or in his own way subtle?

That was the beginning of more foolishness, for on the next Sunday Ramoun came and perceived the toy. He grew black with jealous rage as could only have been expected; but afterwards he came abreast of his rival by means of two exquisite lace fronts to be worn between the folds of the fichu.

Madeloun expostulated as well as she could; but two things told against her argument: the fact that she needed these *tabliers*, and longed for them sorely when they were spread before her eyes; and the absolute necessity of keeping her two suitors evenly balanced if she was to juggle with them much longer.

When her finery lay before her in her little room in the windmill, she could not but think it a pity that so few should admire it — only herself and a purblind father and two foolish young men, who were ready at the slightest provocation to bite each other's heads off.

She made a great resolve, not without some fluttering in the breast; or, perhaps, she yielded to a great temptation. At all events, she decided that in view of Father Gougoulin's summons, now many weeks old, it was time for her to be seen in the church, if only to show that she could still hold her head up and not care for slanderous tongues. And so she dressed herself into a gay peacock, with all the new finery that she could command, and walked boldly up to the Shrine of the Four Maries. Courage failed her a little as she stepped into its cool

LITTLE GAMES OF LOVE

dampness; or perhaps she had already lost heart from the questioning and critical glances that she encountered by the way. She was glad to slip into a chair behind Miano, who owns the broadest back in the village.

If she wondered at the unkind glances and the coolness of greeting, it was all through her ignorance of human nature. Perhaps she had flattered herself that the women would not know whence had come her new splendour. If so, the little stupid must have forgotten that Pèire had a jealous mother, and Ramoun a sister who drank up gossip as the earth drinks rain, only to give it out again in streams of slander. Madeloun should have known from long experience that there was not a house, from the ancient quarters of the watchman, huddled against the gate, to the highest dwelling overshadowed by the great castle, in which was not discussed the laying-out of every sou of her hard-earned silver.

So she gave an inattentive ear to the sermon, and afterwards lingered on the steps outside, grieved and pouting because none of the neighbours would speak to her. But while she was still thinking of their raised shoulders and averted glances, she was startled by the voice of Father Gougoulin at her ear. She had tried to escape his notice in the church, and thought she had succeeded; but in any case she had not supposed he could be so quick in getting out of his vestments.

"Eh, well, Madeloun," said he, "you have come to Mass, but not to Confession. It is high time to begin that. Come to-morrow morning after the service."

She returned to the windmill, all her gay plumes drooping, for his direct command she dared not disobey.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE CLIFF OF BRIAZON

MADELOUN felt her loneliness even more that afternoon, when her father had gone back to the Place du Connétable de Montferrand, to hang over the wall with his cronies. She left the windmill, still in the fine clothes that she was too listless to lay aside, and strolled very sadly along the cliff, wondering what would be the outcome of her perplexities. And all the while crisis was coming upon her with the speed of the whirlwind.

The herald of the storm was Ramoun, inoffensive enough in his Sunday dress, black- and white-checked trousers, pink shirt, red necktie, and blue serge coat, unpastoral but, he fondly believed, fashionable.

"Come for a walk," was his sheepish invitation.

"I am walking," said Madeloun sedately. "*You* may come if you like."

They were silent, he staring in some embarrassment at the ground, she dimpling and looking at him sidewise, feeling almost her old self, thus attended and thus admired in the sweet mountain sunshine.

THE CLIFF OF BRIAZON

"How long are you going to live in this hole?" he asked abruptly, after a time.

"Until my house is built," she teased him.

"The house that Pèire is building" — he turned savage quickly. "The fool! And you to let him! I came to tell you so."

"Eh, well," she answered demurely, "I am only a poor girl, but I must have some place to live. If that is all you have to say, you'd better go home again."

"As if our farm were not open to you!" said Ramoun, with scorn. "You promised me you would not wait long for that now."

"It is not *long* yet," said she, looking about for a way of escape. She found it in the leisurely advent of Pèire up the plateau; and waved him a gay welcome with her handkerchief.

He was not more pleased to see Ramoun than was the latter to see him; but they made the best of each other.

"We are going for a walk" — Ramoun showed his teeth.

But Madeloun was quick with, "Yes — come along."

Well, then, she was in her element, with two to juggle and keep from smashing each other's heads. She talked furiously with red spots in her cheeks, and did her best to bring them into active conversation. But it was always Ramoun that answered, with a manner half sulky, half defiant, blended too with the air of one who claims a certain right. Pèire walked half a pace behind the two, cigarette in mouth, eyes on the horizon, and if he heard what they said he gave no sign.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

Suddenly, he moved close, caught the girl's arms and pinioned them behind her, muttering, still with the cigarette between his teeth: "What say you, Ramoun? They used to punish traitors here by dropping them from the cliff of Briazn. She is a huzzy — playing with us as she played with the fellow from Avignon. What say you? Shall we throw her down?"

Madeloun stopped with sudden heart-beat, and looked over her shoulder into his face. Ramoun laughed and seized her from the other side, playfully shaking her and dragging her nearer the edge. And even as they stood, they were not too far away.

She was not frightened, she told herself, for she knew that it was all their way of joking; but to please them she pretended to shriek with fear, and to struggle, calling upon each in turn to save her from the other. All the while, Ramoun laughed like a dog, and Pèire pulled her steadily, savagely, in silence, except that his feet, scuffling among the pebbles, sent now and again a clump of stones rattling down the cliff-side.

When the three had arrived so near the edge that they could look over, Pèire braced himself for the retreat, but Ramoun continued a sort of monkey-dance step of his own.

Each had a hand of Madeloun now, and each felt it suddenly stiffen in his grasp. She leaned forward so that with a common sense of danger they tried to pull her back. Her whisper was too amazing to be true: "There's some one coming up!"

Pèire steadied himself and looked. Ramoun dropped

THE CLIFF OF BRIAZON

Madeloun's hand and fell on his knees to peer over the edge.

"It is Trillon," she whispered again. "Nobody else would try." The unuttered question in her heart was whether he had seen the three of them from the plain below, and with his long sight had recognized them, and had chosen this mode of ascent to be upon them the more quickly.

Père still held her hand and she clung to him in fear of sudden dizziness.

Silent and breathless, the three of them watched the climbing figure. All that they could be sure of was that he did not wear the blue clothes that they had come to associate with Trillon; they judged from his frequent pauses, and an occasional flash as of metal in his hand, that he was cutting for himself steps in the soft limestone as he climbed. Otherwise, they knew the ascent was impossible.

Ramoun gave a sharp cry, and suddenly flung a handful of pebbles into the air. The climber lifted his head, wavered, and for a second it seemed to all three that he must lose his balance and go down; but he recovered himself, clinging like a fly, and presently resumed his slow upward progress.

"How dared you? How dared you?" cried Madeloun, in a passionate whisper to the offender, and her cheeks were as white as paper. Then she loosed her savage clutch upon his arm, hid her face and rocked backwards and forwards in an agony of prayer. So reckless was she that Père held her more firmly. So they waited, all

THE GOLDEN HAWK

motionless — until a panting sound stirred Madeloun from her fear. She looked up, and saw Trillon's face, very red among its yellow fluff, just appearing above the ledge.

A moment he hung there, glancing from one to another of the odd group, with an expression that they could not fathom; then he flung up one leg and lay at his ease, resting, though a slight push would have hurled him to the bottom.

"Come all the way — oh, come all the way!" implored Madeloun, loosening Pèire's hold and running to him.

He stopped her with two syllables. Turning his yellow eyes full upon her, he said, without passion, "*Cocotte*."

The old word of her mother's struck her like a blow. She looked at him helplessly, as he continued: "I saw you here with your two men. You were better in the convent — *hein?*"

She was stung by the injustice, yet helpless to answer for herself; but Pèire came to her rescue, speaking deliberately: "When a man deserts his sweetheart, what can he expect?"

"What do I find?" asked Trillon, still holding them all three with his extraordinary light eyes.

Madeloun tried to speak, but her lips quivered too much for clear utterance: "You made me very unhappy —"

"But now you are consoled?" he asked calmly.

She dared him for a second: "I had to be! What else was to do?"

There was a passage of eyes between them, and perhaps his laugh showed defeat. With some scrambling and dropping of loose stones he came wholly over the edge: "Well, now I have come back, what next?"

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THE CLIFF OF BRIAZON

Madeloun was encouraged in her pertness. "Like the Marshal of France, go down again," she said, laying her hand on Pèire's arm, even though Ramoun snarled.

"*Sarnipabîtune!*" She never knew who uttered the word. She was suddenly shaken off and flung backwards into safety; and the two men were locked, heads low and necks strained, perilously near the brink. The chief fact in the poor girl's dazed consciousness was Ramoun's laugh, as he hastily stumbled out of the path of the wrestlers.

Twice — three times — she strove to force her way between them, with piercing entreaty; but each time Ramoun was upon her and dragged her back. She could only watch them, Pèire grim-set as an old Roman, Trillon showing his teeth.

So quickly was the whole thing over that it seemed as if they had scarcely begun, before, as they staggered and struggled near Ramoun, he thrust out his foot and tripped Trillon up; and Pèire opening his arms in sudden self-defence, the two were parted. Madeloun, staring, thought she must be mad, at the sight of Pèire among the stones and turf, and Trillon vanished. Look as she would, there were only two men on the cliff: Pèire half stunned, Ramoun white and shaking. And Trillon had given no cry as he went over.

Madeloun was the first to waken to consciousness of what had happened. She did not stop to look, or even to scream; but fled along the edge of the cliff until she came to the all but invisible path by which the ancient garrison could have been reached, in time of war, through a secret

THE GOLDEN HAWK

postern now ruined. By a labyrinth of zigzags it descends to the plain below.

Along the thread of this trail the girl ran as if she had wings, and scarcely touched the ground, except for guidance. It was by miracle that she reached the plain alive; for, indeed, as soon as she came to the low mound, where the steep shelving is finished, she fell headlong and rolled, cutting her lip and bruising her fingers, so dizzy that for a time she did not know where she was.

By her sudden flight she had missed the worst of the experience; for the two men, when they found courage to look over, perceived that Trillon had not fallen all the way, but was hanging like a cat to a tuft of broom, well beyond reach, except one should go down on a rope. They stared at each other, and Ramoun would perhaps have turned to run, but Pèire clutched his arm, wordless. They could see the cracking of the earth and the swaying of the broom as Trillon climbed higher, struggling for a cleft or a foothold of any sort . . . Long seemed the time to them — long before the catastrophe came to its climax; but it was immeasurably short. They watched a great boulder fall with clods and clouds of dust, and tangle so thick that they could scarcely descry that there was a human being within it; they watched until this mass neared the bottom. But when they saw the man make one last frantic clutch at a projection that held him for a moment, then seemed to shake him off before he could have had much consciousness of safety — then with one accord they turned away.

Pèire it was who first recovered himself enough to follow

THE CLIFF OF BRIAZON

in Madeloun's footsteps; and Ramoun after, to see what lay at the foot of the rocks where traitors had perished of old. When they neared the bottom, more slowly, more steadily than she had gone, they found her just struggling to her feet among the stones and prickly plants.

Pèire was generous. "Look out for her, Ramoun," he said. "I will go on" — and gave them no chance for dispute. A moment they faced each other, he with a terrible guilt in his eyes that could not meet her white-faced accusation.

Then they were shaken by a tremendous peal of laughter and Pèire's shouting. They followed as quickly as they could, and found the quarryman doubling up at intervals with paroxysms of amusement, and Trillon — I warn you that the scene lacks dignity — Trillon safe in a furze bush. He was badly pricked, of course; and so caught and pinned by the myriads of needles among which he had been rudely thrust, that he was unable to help himself; but Pèire judged from the position in which he lay, as well as from a hasty investigation, that no bones were broken. He had a scalp wound from a rough encounter with a boulder, and he had not fully recovered the breath beaten out of his body; but for all ordinary purposes he was sound enough. He even directed the two how best to extricate him; and, although swearing under their breath, they felt bound to obey because of their common guilt. And the first of their punishment was to see Madeloun tearing her frilled apron into strips and binding therewith the head of the wounded man. I am afraid they did not linger to hear the lovers' cooings; and they

THE GOLDEN HAWK

could imagine easily enough the kisses that followed upon their departure.

But Trillon said first, with his laugh undaunted: "What do you expect when you throw a hawk down a cliff? You should have wrung my neck if you wanted to put me out of the way. But I'll see you both hanged sooner."

They found it difficult to answer, but Pèire was stung into the retort: "And now I suppose you will go and live in the house I have built; but the game isn't finished yet."

"No," said Trillon, with a sharp look at the girl, "that it never is when I am about."

"If you had stayed a little longer," said Pèire, "you might talk differently. Look at that brooch."

But he had no time, for Madeloun suddenly tore it loose and flung it at the quarryman's feet, and with it the beautiful new *jaudau*, so that her neck was bare.

"Take them," she cried passionately. "I have been a wicked girl! I hate you both!"

But Trillon seemed not to have heard. He was on his feet now, half leaning against a boulder, plainly in need of strong drink, being much shaken.

"As for that," said he, "I always knew she was a flirt. And it is just possible that I had my reasons for staying away. But if she preferred either of you to me — or would change her mind now — I can go back whence I came. *Adessias!*"

He began to walk unsteadily along the path, leaving the two men dumb, and between them the tokens that had been hurled at their feet. But Madeloun ran after him, still claiming rather than giving support.

THE CLIFF OF BRIAZON

"Do you want to chain your wild hawk after all?" he asked.

But her question was poignant: "How could you leave me so again?"

"That," said he, "I will tell you. Come."

CHAPTER XXXV

THE CHAPEL OF THE MARIES

Low on the hillside, just above the olive-gardens, is a little shrine built to two of those same Holy Maries commemorated in the village church, the mothers of St. James the Greater and of St. James the Less. Tradition has it that they were driven out of Palestine and fled in an open boat, without guidance and without food; and that they were conveyed safely by angels until they were moored in the shelter of the rock of Briazon at Castelar, although this is now forty miles and more from the sea. However, on the hillside there is a rock cut with two figures in long draperies — Roman generals, say wise men, but the folk of Castelar know better, and have built against this rock the little shrine of the Holy Women. Here shepherds with their flocks sometimes halt for a hasty prayer, kneeling on the steps outside, whence through the open door they can see the images of the saints in their boat and the floor strewn with broom blossom.

Here it was that Trillon dropped, more shaken now than he was willing to confess, and a little dizzy from the wound in his head.

THE CHAPEL OF THE MARIES

"First tell me," said he, "what the quarryman meant by the house he had built?"

At this, she poured out her confession, regretting herself not a whit for all the light folly that had ruled her in his absence.

He did not speak for a time; but at last he said: "It gives them some show of right — those who would have shut you up in the convent."

"You, too?" she gasped. "Oh, I will go back there! I will never stay out in this cruel world. What can a poor girl do?"

But now he was laughing. She could see the twinkle of his eyes, half obscured by the bandage. "After all," said he, "you have learned one thing; and that is to make other people work for you. There's no reason why we should not reward our friend the quarryman, some day, when we have come into our fortune. However, you must see that he was counting on my probable defection; and that he meant to reap his profit when it was clear that I would not return. So he is not ill met. He would have had my farm and my girl and a new house — all together."

Madeloun was silent a while, being in some doubt whether Père would enjoy the patronage of her man, and not satisfied that he would have been greatly enriched had he taken the farm as well as herself. When she understood that Trillon was waiting for her to speak, she continued: "I learned more, living out here like a gypsy. I did not know I could be so easily content. But for — what I promised my mother, I would go with you anywhere to-morrow."

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"Still harping on that?" he said, with a frown. "Eh well, we must progress further with the matter."

"I am going to Confession to-morrow morning," she said.

At first he swore, then he laughed: "I forbid you."

She shook her head: "Impossible. In that case I should grow reckless and lose my soul altogether, and go with you without waiting —"

"Well, what harm?" he asked.

She thought to turn the tables on him: "With you who went away and left me for weeks without a word? Who knows? It may happen again. Why did you go?"

"I don't know," he answered truthfully. "I did not know at the time. I took the wrong turning, then my feet moved of themselves. Before the morning I found myself in Avignon."

"If that is the way of it," said she piteously, "it will surely happen again."

He shrugged: "That's the worst of my breed — sudden flights. But if you were to get used to it?"

"I should always be left forlorn," she sighed.

"If you were to come along? Straight into the sun, I say the word? And take your chance?"

"As things are?" she asked, under her breath.

"As things are."

She was like a child feeling its way step by step into a pool that may be deep: "Africa then to-morrow? And leave all these troubles behind?" Then curiosity overcame her: "But tell me of Avignon."

"Eh, well, the truth is, when I found myself there

THE CHAPEL OF THE MARIES

everything was so easy that I drifted into the old habits of life and forgot all about you."

When she would have murmured, he laid his hand on her mouth: "Yes, but you would not stay forgotten, so in the end I had to come back here — just in time, it seems."

Well, this at least was sweet to hear.

"I went at once to my worthy aunt — by instinct, I suppose; and I found the old lady a good deal changed. It may have been conscience working in her — I judged it to be that. She received me not unkindly — gave me board and lodging and cigarettes — bought me these clothes. I do not commend her taste; it is a taste for mud and rainy days, such as it is said they have in the North all the time. But money — oh, no! She kept the purse-strings tight; and it was too much trouble to undo them. Besides, I had everything I wanted for the moment. And with the little I had to begin upon, I made more, when I had found my old companions . . . However, I spent all that. I don't know how. When I looked for it, it was always gone."

"I think the old lady's mind had failed a little. She seemed to have forgotten the cheque she gave me — ah, you don't know about that. Well, the tale will keep. You shall chuckle over it when we are married . . . I suggested to her that she should deliver the sausage-shop into our hands, that she ought not to go on stuffing pigs' skins all her life, that it was time to retire, that we —"

"Well" ejaculated Madeloun.

"Ah, but I did not intend that we should continue the

THE GOLDEN HAWK

business. I thought that we might sell out at a profit. What would you?"

"And she?" asked the girl.

"She? Eh, well, she has *rente* enough, aside from all that, to keep herself and a husband, if she wants one, and her priest as well — which is no small thing to say. I tell you she's comfortable; and she knows it — only she has a fear of being skinned as she has skinned one or two others, whom I will not mention . . . To speak the truth, I don't know whether she would have taken me in, even for a time, only she had to think of the neighbours, and there are many in Avignon who remember me. Besides, I told her of you, and while she was prepared to give you a proper welcome —"

"Oh, you talk — you talk!" said Madeloun in despair.

"— she did not expect me to stop long there. Not so long as I expected to stay myself. Eh, well, I was content for a time — sunning myself at cafés, like my father before me, and forgetting you — *hein?* It was a pleasure to hunt up old Mercadou. He had kept the fiddle I made years ago. We played tunes together, until we came to the end of all we knew. Then he began upon Sedan. I stood as much of it as I could; but when he took to marking out old maps with rows of pins, it was too much for me. I was sorry, but I had to give him up. I was driven to Pons and the poodles; but they were not as funny as they used to be — by no means! Perhaps I was forgetting you too hard — *hein?* You don't seem to enjoy this story, Leleto, my little hedge-queen?"

"One day I turned mad. I don't think the sun wa

THE CHAPEL OF THE MARIES

too hot; but I was sitting over a cup of coffee with a cigarette at *Le Vieux Moulin* at Villeneuve — I forget, you would not know. I was on the edge of the river, and I had a paper, but I could not read. I stared at the passing of the Rhone until I came to myself with a splash and found myself in it —”

With a little cry, she caught his arm.

“Oh, I’m safe enough and solid enough — no ghost. I don’t know how I came to jump in; but once there, I turned towards Avignon against the current, mind you, against it. When I reached the last broken pier of the old bridge, I was fresh enough, but I had a fancy to climb it. Up I went and along the top, until I came to the chapel of St. Bénézet — you know? Of course not. There I stopped, and — well, I am not sure that it was a prayer or a vow or anything like that; but I said I would go back to you. It was a fine sunset. It made me think. But the best of the occasion was that the concierge of the bridge saw me from the shore and came running out in her petticoat to ask how I had got there without a fee. I was cold and dripping by that time, and she was hot with rage, so what did I do? Eh, well, what would you have? I caught her round the waist, as far as I could reach, and I made her dance a good round. She scolded — she almost kicked — but we spun and we hopped and we scraped in the sunset. And when I began to sing, she laughed. You know the old song?

‘Sur le pont d’Avignon

Tout le monde y danse en ronde.’

We were only two, but we made as much of it as we could,

THE GOLDEN HAWK

for presently she entered into the spirit of the thing, as the twilight grew thick. How she reckoned afterwards with those who may have seen her from the bank, I do not know; but we became good friends, and she let me slip through the house, taking no fee, while her husband's back was bent over his soup.

"And so I went home and found that my aunt who, had complained that same morning before I went out, had taken to her bed, and was in the hands of neighbours. There was nothing for me to do, but I hung about and waited to see when I might be of any use, and to keep watch over the priest, who seemed to have a mighty interest in the affair . . . No, she did not die, but she kept me from coming back as soon as I had planned — you see? She had a long illness, and as soon as she was recovered enough to lift her head, she sent for me. 'Well, nephew,' says she, 'I am not going away just yet. But let me tell you this: when the time comes for my departure, it will be to your advantage to be as far from me as possible.'

"'My dear aunt,' says I, 'my advantage was ever the last thing I sought; but, indeed, it is time I should be getting back to my farm and my sweetheart, for I don't know why I left them, I am sure.'

"At this she actually smiled: 'Look, you, nephew,' says she, 'there's no love lost between us; but I am sorry for your disappointment that I have been so slow to depart.'

"Here I would have protested politely, as is my way, but she would not be put off. She fumbled in something, a bag, I must suppose, that lay by her side like a baby, and she brought out a louis. 'Here's for your trouble

THE CHAPEL OF THE MARIES

in waiting,' says she, 'and now — *adiéu*. I'll send for you when I want you.'

"You may well believe how I laughed at that. I was going to refuse the money; but then I remembered something and said to her, 'It will just do to make my peace with Madeloun. Good-by, my aurt. Long may you live and prosper. And thanks be to you now for what you bequeath me in your will; and if that is nothing, thanks for the blessings you have conferred in the past.' And so we parted, the first day she was allowed to sit up. There's the tale . . . and now I make my peace — unless the thing be jolted out of my pocket in the fall."

However, he found what he sought: a little box, stuffed with cotton wool, and in this a small gold ring.

"You see," he explained, "we must be married presently, or it will be the waste of a good coin,"

She suddenly pushed him away into the twilight. "Go on. I will follow. I want to pray."

There she knelt humbly on the steps before the shrine, and prayed to the Holy Women, who in their rudderless, oarless boat had journeyed, safe under the guidance of God, that they would help her in the devious way upon which she had entered. For that night the thought of the curse rested heavily upon her soul.

However, she joined Trillon in a more serene and practical frame of mind, dwelling upon the need of returning at once to her father, and getting him off to the *Cabro d'Or*, where Jôusè must take them in again.

"But why?" said Trillon. "It is fine weather. Give

THE GOLDEN HAWK

me a blanket, and I can gather broom enough for a bed. I will sleep in the new house."

She protested, but he overbore objection, except that when he said they must further thresh out their plans for the immediate future, this same night, she put him off: "Wait till morning. We shall know better then. One cannot think in the darkness."

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CHAPTER XXXVI

QUARRY OR WELL

HE insisted upon going with her to the church, the following morning; and he lingered in one of the little chapels hewn out of solid rock in the days of Charlemagne, and now green and mouldy with age and dampness and close with the oppression that comes of no sunlight, while Madeloun went to tell of her sins and to ask how they might be mended. I am afraid his own did not weigh upon him unduly.

But he grew rather dull in the heavy atmosphere, and went presently to hang about the steps, until Madeloun and Father Gougoulin came out together. The girl's delicious beauty was stained with tears, but she smiled at him faintly.

The priest was prepared to encounter him, and said no more than: "We thought we had seen the last of you."

"Hoped, you mean," interjected Trillon. "Hoped."

"Eh, well," said the priest, "for the sake of this poor child — hoped."

Madeloun looked up with quick protest; but the words did not pass her lips, for Trillon was speaking more

THE GOLDEN HAWK

fiercely than she had ever before heard him speak: "I will give you one week, Father Gougoulin. If you do not call the banns in church next Sunday, we go to Arles on the Monday, and find another priest to do that service for us, and if you make any difficulties — God help us! we shall do without the Church altogether."

"And Madeloun," said the curé, showing no anger but speaking with a certain soft insistence, "now that Madeloun is newly shriven of her sins, you would immediately burden her soul with more?"

"I take them upon myself," answered Trillon.

"You cannot — you are no scapegoat," said the priest. "But I will not be threatened. And I warn you. Madeloun" — he turned to the girl — "you are going back to your brother's house to-day."

She hung her head without speaking.

"If at the end of three days you still persist in your folly, and have not returned — well, I make no threats. Father Gougoulin shut his lips closely and turned away very grim.

Madeloun was pale with a deadly fear, as the two faced the village street together; but Trillon was more himself than usual. He met the gossiping women as if he enjoyed crossing words with them, and he told so many lies during this short progress that Madeloun wondered if he had lost his senses altogether.

"Why did you make everything out so splendid?" she whispered, as they went through the Porte Horloge together. "They will think you own the world."

"And so I mean them to think," said he, thrusting back

QUARRY OR WELL

as if it pained him, the bandage made of her apron, that he still wore. "And in a sense, it is true — it shall be true. I have the luck. Every word that I have said this morning helps to make it true — each is a fetter linking the facts more closely to our lives."

"But the great fact is," said she unhappily, "that we have nothing and shall have nothing to the end of our days."

"Tut, tut," was his answer. "I shall begin the well to-day. Where there was a windmill there must have been a well."

"But if not?" she persisted.

He made a gesture indicating impatience of all women who would meddle with business.

Then she tried, as girls will, to be reasonable. "You see we cannot go on living in the windmill, or you sleeping on the floor of the new house. Consider how the village would talk. My father may go back to the *Cabro d'Or* — I will not. And after Confession this morning, I felt how happy a thing it is not to be wicked any more. I shall go back to the convent. Three days you have — three, he said. And you are face to face with the situation. You cannot wriggle away" (yes, she used the word) "this time. It means breaking with me forever. And that is all."

He was silent for a time, kicking the little stones out of his path, not viciously, but thoughtfully, and all the while whistling in an undertone. At last he spoke up: "There is reason in what you say. I'm a roving vagabond, not fit to have the care of a girl like you. But this I will promise.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

Look you, give me the three days to find my well. If at the end of that time I have failed — if even you say I have failed, though I do not admit it — I will give up all my ideas and get work in the quarry."

"Would you?" she cried all in a glow. "Oh, would you?"

But he was not transported by the scheme. "We could still live at the farm," said he, and could not resist adding, "until something better offers. And then, when even the curé admits that I am earning my own livelihood, perhaps —"

But here she had doubts: "You do not know him."

"At least, this is a beginning," he continued patiently; and so much she had to admit. Poor child! She felt dimly that it's an ill world for a woman who may not trust utterly the wisdom of her man.

But his zeal was amazing, she confessed to herself. No sooner had they reached the windmill than he imparted to Auzias the information that he was about to dig a well, and invited his assistance in carrying off the rubble. Notwithstanding his bandaged head, his bruises and his stiffness, he flung aside his coat, found pick and spade and looked about him for a suitable centre of operations.

While he still hesitated, she asked: "But how will you know where the well was?"

Her words gave him his idea, and he advanced upon her, and put a franc into her hand. "Close your eyes," he commanded, and whirled her three times. "Now throw."

She protested that it was folly, but he drowned her

QUARRY OR WELL

words in kisses; and in the end, to stay his importunity, she sent the coin in a feeble flight.

"I have heard somewhere or dreamed," said Trillon, before he released her, "that silver will find water. We can but try. And I know no other way." All the while his eyes were searching for the sparkle of the coin in the sun; but there were many crystalline pebbles and the task was long. It was old Auzias who at last reached out a tremulous stick, and pointed to a little hollow not far from where he sat. And this proved to be the treasure trove.

With a mighty exclamation, Trillon spat on his hands and rubbed them together, leaped into the shallow pit and tossed up a thin spadeful of earth.

As it happened, his luck had pointed to one of the few places on his estate where it was possible to dig for any considerable depth. As the morning advanced, he stood in a hole of his own making, though he often had to fall to with the pick, and then stoop and lift out with his hands rocks that taxed all his strength. The old man, under directions, loaded the mule with panniers and carried away the earth and stones, dumping them in a spot where Trillon said they would yet smell bean blossoms, after the rock had had a good coating of earth. In the intervals, which were long enough, since only one man, was digging, the helper rested near the pit and amused himself with looking over such small stones and pebbles as came up.

The two were often joined by Madeloun, who brought her sewing, while she was preparing the dinner. When at last the sun stood in the meridian, and she came to call

THE GOLDEN HAWK

them to the meal, Trillon climbed out of his hole with alacrity, wiping the sweat from his forehead, and drawing long breaths of relief. He pointed with no small pride to his handiwork — a neat circular pit, though still somewhat shallow.

"But if there is no water?" Madeloun could not forbear asking.

"There will be water," he asserted with confidence. "Look" — he bent over a little heap of stuff that the old man had collected — "here are fragments of jugs that have been dropped in and broken, ages and ages ago."

I am not disposed to say how an archæologist would have judged this ingenious explanation of the Roman or Greek potsherds in the hands of Auzias; but it made Madeloun laugh, and she was content to be danced away to the *al fresco* dinner, protesting all the while that she was no cook, and she knew it could not be good.

However, Trillon was polite about the results; and the three of them were merry indeed, talking about the days to come when they could look into their cool dark pit and draw up thence refreshment that would make the arid land bloom like a rose. Madeloun for once proved a successful castle-builder, and even the old man was led away into the land of dreams.

After dinner, Trillon gave himself up to a cigarette, for just the length of time that Madeloun spent in washing her few dishes; and in this brief interval, as he lay on the grass in the shade of the windmill, he confided to her that now he had had a foretaste of the cooking of married life,

QUARRY OR WELL

he could safely say that it overbalanced freedom on the road and pick-up-what-you-can-get.

This made her so happy that when he resumed his labours, she took her sewing as near as she might for the flying earth, and beguiled the hours with snatches of mountain song to make the work go faster.

And fast it went, for Trillon bent and heaved with a will; and Auzias played always with his shards, until he had two panniers full, and then he conveyed them off and dumped with all the briskness in the world.

Towards sunset, Madeloun said: "It looks to me as if all the people from all the country round had come to this one spot to break their pitchers."

"*Cacarc-a!*" crowed Trillon. "I have struck a piece of wall."

Then she folded her sewing and came to look; and Auzias tottered up, and the three of them bent close, but could make out nothing but an indeterminate fragment of masonry. Work as he would, Trillon could discover little more that night. When at supper-time he flung himself on the turf, he was conscious of strong virtue, feeling that if ever man in the world had earned his salad and cheese, he was that man.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE EMPEROR OF THE EAST

It was the most curious well ever devised by the mind of man. By dinner-time the second day, Trillon was so full of the curiosities of its construction that he did not observe the sweetness of the soup or the smokiness of the meat, or even give full attention to Madeloun's apologies. Like many young cooks, she was having the experience in which the summer of fulfilment does not follow close upon the spring of promise.

But Trillon mumbled his answers and comments; and developed a permanent straight line between his brows. His well appeared to him to be a labyrinth.

At sunset, in a sort of despair, he ceased digging, and announced that he was going up to the village to try his luck at a café. He lighted his pipe and endeavoured to return to his usual serenity; but Madeloun could see that he was not only troubled with a sense of failure, but humiliated by the thought of working in the quarry among the men to whom he had before, in a friendly way, considered himself superior. Accordingly, when he tried to jest about finding his luck, she understood the phrase

THE EMPEROR OF THE EAST

to mean either that he would drink himself into a state of forgetfulness, or would gamble with the little money that he had. How else indeed might the words be interpreted?

It was pride that made her ask: "You will not go to the *Cabro d'Or*?"

No, he admitted, with some degree of shamefacedness, that his choice was the humbler precinct, the *Emperor of the East*.

So Madeloun and the old man sat looking over the plain until the twilight joined the rising mists and made dense blackness, and then went to bed very sadly.

And Trillon, although shorn of his last hope, perhaps because in his own mind he admitted this painful fact, entered the *Emperor of the East* with an air rather more jaunty than usual.

He was surprised to see a large company assembled about the one long table, until he perceived the cause of this gathering in calico curtains across a corner of the room. Evidently, there was going to be a puppet-show for the delectation of the patrons of the café. The *Cabro d'Or* would be doing poor business this night.

Trillon was unexpected, but he was not slow to see that his arrival created more than surprise. There was a distinct exchange of looks among the group, which he interpreted to mean: "Here's the very man we have been talking about — now for our chance!"

Seeing that the one table was nearly full, and that nobody moved to make room for him, Trillon, with a brief general salutation, crossed over and took his place alone at a small table. He felt that he was in for some-

THE GOLDEN HAWK

thing — he could not tell what or why — and he rather enjoyed the prospect. He looked for Ramoun or Pèire as the probable root of the trouble, but neither was present.

He ordered an absinthe, though he was not given to the liquor, and indicated, as well as might be done by expression alone, that the company was to come on when it liked.

During a brief silence, he heard the drum of the puppet-show man outside, up and down the village street, trying to beat in a larger audience. But the company was not over-slow to open fire.

It was Alàri of Montpaon, a brigand-type of man, with a felt hat cocked over one eye, and a fiercely-pointed moustache, who got in the first shot: "And how goes the *mas*?"

"How goes yours?" answered Trillon politely. "Do you look for crops now? It is out of season. Ask me later."

"Come, come," said a wide-mouthed village youth, a wastrel and a good-for-nothing, nudging Alàri in the ribs. "Anyone can see you are from the country. The olive-trees in the Pit of Artaban are breaking their branches, and the owner of them is contemplating purchase of the château."

At this, there was a roar, for the nominal prince of Castelar is a notorious bankrupt; but Trillon kept countenance and sipped absinthe as if his thoughts were of the pleasantest.

"I hear," said a grizzled little old shepherd, "that you are digging a well?"

THE EMPEROR OF THE EAST

In spite of himself, Trillon laughed, remembering the extraordinary underground structure that for two days he had been trying to dignify with this name. "Yes," said he, "and any fellow that comes and helps shall have free use of the water."

"How deep have you gone?" asked ruddy Jan of the village shop.

"It's as dry as the soul of Judas!" interrupted a pert young shepherd, Charloun of Masblanc. "I passed this morning early before the ménage was stirring."

The words were innocent, but the insult conveyed by the tone was not lost upon the community. They rocked with laughter at the thrust, and one enthusiastically patted Charloun on the back.

"Deep enough," said Trillon composedly, though his face shot red, "quite deep enough to make a comfortable grave for any man that I drop into it; and with plenty of boulders to jam him down until Doomsday."

At this, amusement was turned into a sudden little hiss of amazement and anger; and one or two threats were uttered.

"Not deep enough for Pèire," said Savié, Ramoun's father.

"Perhaps not, but deep enough for you and your son together," said Trillon, sipping.

Savié got to his feet, knocking his chair over, stuttering with rage and pointing a finger.

"Eh, well," said Trillon, "it's a pity your son is not here himself—or Pèire, since you have mentioned him. I came to have a quiet evening, not to quarrel with old men."

THE GOLDEN HAWK

It seemed then that there were many willing substitutes for the missing youths, and a general fight was imminent, in which the landlord's chairs and bottles might have fared ill. But at the critical moment, Trillon's luck — or was it chance? — brought a diversion by the entrance of a man who was strange to Castelar; and he immediately became the focus of all eyes. For a moment there was a tacit proclamation of truce, seats and drinks were resumed; but the trouble went on boiling below, as was clear from looks and mutters.

The last visitor peered about the room with a short-sighted glance; then crossed over and sat down at the table where Trillon was — a most signal instance, the latter said afterwards, of his phenomenal luck. By the time the newcomer had ordered coffee, the puppet-man had returned, laid aside his drum, and gone behind the curtain to make ready his creatures.

"Ah — ah," said the stranger, rubbing his hands together and beaming: "It is the great drama of *Pyrame et Thisbe*, is it not?"

Trillon smiled and shrugged his ignorance.

"I saw the notice outside. I am a great lover of folk-lore, monsieur —"

"Folk-lore?" asked Trillon. "What is that?" And when he had the explanation, he added: "I see. You are one of those people who wander about the country taking an interest in old things."

At first the stranger looked offended, for though he was shabbily dressed, his well-worn clothes had about them an air of position if not of prosperity; then he laughed

THE EMPEROR OF THE EAST

and said: "You are right. I am a lover of folk-lore and antiquities."

"And that is why you have come to the puppet-show?" asked Trillon idly.

"That is why. It is a relic — a relic of the old time."

Now what made Trillon do it? He deliberately fumbled in his coat-pockets and brought out a handful of potsherds and odds and ends that he had put there for a second look. He laid them in a little heap before the old man. "Relics?" said he. "And are these relics too, or what?" Why did he do it, can you answer me?

"Ah — ah," said the antiquary, and pushed away his cup. His fingers began to tremble with eagerness. "Arabic — Arabic — period of — hah! Can it be Phœnician? No — yes — no, they are unheard of in these parts. Roman — Roman — yes, Roman — Etruscan — — Samian — prehistoric — yes, yes. Greek — Greek — archaic that — might have been brought by the Phocians when they landed at Marseilles. Well — well — where did you find them all?"

"In my well," says Trillon, "a well that I am digging."

"Good," answered the old man. "I buy them. And have you any more?"

"Buy them?" Trillon laughed. "I will give you them by the cart-load if you will take them away —"

"My son" — the stranger held up a warning finger — "let me speak you a word of advice. Never give away antiquities, however worthless they seem. I say it to my own loss; but I will pay you a fair price for the lot."

"What do you call a fair price?" asked Trillon. "It's

THE GOLDEN HAWK

an intolerable nuisance digging them up; they come hard."

But now the stranger lifted a forefinger in sign that the miniature curtain had been raised; and there was silence throughout the room while the little play went on.

Trillon knew it by heart, and all the while that the lovers squeaked and fainted and ran, and the father roared, and the mischief-makers put their heads together, he was deep in a muse, forgetting even to smoke.

But the stranger sat intent and applauded as heartily as the wildest youth in the place. And they, those brown children of the sun, who a few moments before had been ready to embark upon a mortal fray for almost no cause had now forgotten their wrath in the pathos of the touching death of Pyrame over his sweetheart's hat, and of the young woman's speedy demise upon her swain; and yet scarcely were the tears winked away from their eyes before they were roaring at the broad humour of the interlude.

"Look ye" — the stranger again wagged a finger at Trillon when the curtain had dropped — "I will examine what you have found, and I will pay you enough for your trouble."

"I wish," said Trillon, "you would come and tell me what kind of well it is that I have struck."

"Eh, what?" said the antiquary. "What's that?" — and demanded an explanation.

When he had it, he said: "That's no well. I must look into the question. Eh, eh, this is not my first visit to Castelar. You would not know, but it is I have written a pamphlet on the Roman monument that is falsely sup-

THE EMPEROR OF THE EAST

posed to represent the two Maries, and another on the Celtic camp on the top of Costa Pera. Ah, I know the country for miles around; but this you tell me is more remarkable . . . Plutarch, it is, I believe, who has a line or two . . . I shall not sleep a wink to-night — not until I know what the thing is . . .”

“In that case,” said Trillon, “you’d better come home with me and have a look at it by lantern-light. I will bring you back again to the *Cabro d’Or*.”

“Done,” said the stranger, and rose so abruptly that he all but knocked his chair over.

“But, then,” asked Trillon, disclaiming all eagerness, “what of *Pyrame et Thisbe*?”

“*Pyrame et Thisbe*! What are they to the thing of which you tell me, if it should prove . . . But I must go softly. I see that you have nothing of the zeal of the antiquary, monsieur.”

“No,” said Trillon, “but it’s time I were getting back to the farm.”

“The farm?” was the eager query. “And who owns it?”

“Myself,” says Trillon. “I can show you the papers; but once I have found water, I am in no haste to sell it.”

The stranger dropped a little pile of coppers on the table for the showman, and leaving his coffee half finished walked hastily to the door.

Trillon followed, his hands in his pockets, perfectly at his ease again, and confident in his unreasonable good fortune. He took a long time over the payment for his

THE GOLDEN HAWK

absinthe; and when the feat was accomplished, as if forgetful of the impatient presence at the door, he faced the company at the long table: "If any man here has a word to say to me before I go, or wishes to resume the discussion of a few moments since —"

But he was not allowed to finish, for the curtain went up again, and simultaneously his new acquaintance advanced and took him by the arm. Whereupon, with a prodigious wink that included the entire company, show man, and puppets, and all, he vanished.

But so busy had been the eyes and ears of the audience with what had been gleaned of the conversation over the "relics," that an excited buzz followed upon the departure of the two men, and seriously hampered for a while the progress of the play.

However, in the end, the boards resumed their sway over the emotions, and the men of Castelar returned to the diminutive sorrows and joys that they blended with their wine and bitters, and never dreamed on the little drama that they might have witnessed had they gone forth and followed the trail to the Pit of Artaban.

Madeloun, too, and her father missed the scene with the flickering lantern, the excited whispers and comments that went on under the broken skin of the earth. For hours, the will-o'-the-wisp light wandered about the Pit before it entered upon the track to Castelar; and after a long interval returned hence with a wilful flare, an uncertainty of progress that suggested a high degree of inebriation on the part of its bearer.

But Trillon was not drunk; he was merely joyful; and

THE EMPEROR OF THE EAST

he signified the fact by an improvised lantern war-dance on the plateau above the Pit. And when he was exhausted, he flung himself upon the turf with a laugh smothered, but long and incessant: "My luck!" he gasped. "Oh my luck! *Bon-dieu*, it beats the devil!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE CONQUEST OF THE CHIEF

"It is the third day," said Trillon, with gloom when he came down from the unfinished house to get his black coffee from Madeloun. "And what will Father Gougoulin do?"

"Have you no fear?" she asked, wondering at his change of mood. What had happened at the café the night before? Ah, doubtless he had been gambling and had won again. She did not like the thought.

When he had finished his breakfast, he sat so long over his pipe that she felt bound to remind him of the state in which he had left his prospective well.

"To-day," said he, "I do not work. I make holiday. A man cannot toil every hour of the year."

She looked at him with some scorn: "You think you work so hard?"

He shrugged: "Eh, well, I appeal to you. The last two days — and for a man who was badly shaken too . . ."

"But if you bring it to no ending?" she pleaded.

"I have brought it far enough" — his yellow eyes gleamed upon her with the joy of teasing.

THE CONQUEST OF THE CHURCH

"But if you do not find the water — how will you make the farm pay?" she asked.

"I can make it pay," he asserted with confidence; but, although she waited, he would not deign to explain further.

She turned away, thoroughly out of patience: "Then, to-morrow you go to the quarry of Sant Pau — remember; and we must make the best of the situation."

"To-morrow — to-morrow," he jeered at her, "we may be at the end of this world, or out of it altogether. Meanwhile, there is to-day — a whole long day in which to be idle — lazy —"

"And the curé?" she asked, looking over her shoulder at him.

He sat up then and faced her seriously: "That reminds me. I am in a position now to treat with your good old man. Are you going up to the village?"

"No," she answered, "but father will be at the wedding later" — he remembered then that he had heard what country lass and lad were going to slip into the noose, this day.

"Eh, well," said he, "it's no matter. I can see him this afternoon, for I'm going up myself, having many affairs on my hands."

"So you're not going to work here at all?"

"That is it," said he.

She flung down her sewing with a passionate gesture: "Then why should I?"

He seemed to consider the question freshly: "After all, why should you? Leave it and go dance at the wedding. You'll be dancing at your own shortly."

THE GOLDEN HAWK

She shook her head: "I'm not so sure of that. You with your talking and your mysteries! How do I know what you are about? Will you tell me?" There was a threat in her tone.

He drew his eyelids together as he said: "No, not until to-night. Women cannot keep a secret. What of it?"

"What of it?" — she got to her feet, in a piteous sort of helpless anger. "Eh, well, I shall leave my work and go dance at Eisabèu's wedding — and that's what of it!"

"Do," said he serenely, "and joy go with you."

"And Pèire will be there — and Ramoun too," — she tried to taunt him into jealousy.

"The better for you," was all he said. "Go and have your little game — it may be your last. When it troubles me, I will interfere — not before."

Their glances crossed and his were victorious.

But she stubbornly folded up her sewing and put it away, and going into the windmill began to look out her finery.

Whatever the business was that called Trillon to Castelar, it did not seem urgent, for that worthy man spent the morning drifting about his land and smoking one cigarette after another.

When, well after dinner, he saw Madeloun and her father emerge in their best splendour, he deigned to come near and look at them with a critical eye.

When Auzias asked whether he had not the intention of going with them, he waved his regret in the air, and said that he must stay and look after the animals. And he had already spent half the day and more at his hopeless

THE CONQUEST OF THE CHURCH

well, as if he thought that mere staring would conjure up the means to enrich the land!

So it came about that the betrothed parted with coolness (though Trillon's laugh when he was alone did not betray much vexation on the point); and they did not meet again until the stars were sown thickly.

It seems that after all Trillon had a busy afternoon, with some going back and forth between the village and the *mas*; and I can assure you that he was not alone, though the name of his visitor is too eminent to be touched lightly, and therefore I omit it altogether. If you desire further information, look up in the index of the *Revue des Savants*, a series of articles on "The Site of Glanum and its Treasures." You will be edified.

Near dusk Trillon was again alone, and remembered that he was hungry, and that nobody had cooked him a supper. He foraged among his stores; and was stopped half-way through a sardine by the memory that he had yet to deal with Father Gougoulin.

He ate the faster in order to hasten his going to the village, but while he was in the act of leaping over his wall, he encountered the very individual that he sought, climbing from the road below.

"Eh, well," began the curé, without prelude, "the three days are up, you know, and this mad situation must come to an end."

"It has come to an end, father," observed Trillon, suppressing his glee.

"What end?"

"The natural end. I have fulfilled your all but im-

THE GOLDEN HAWK

possible condition. I have made the *MAS ARTABAN* pay."

"How so?" The priest was clearly startled.

Trillon drew something out of his pocket; "Wait a moment. I will show you." He fumbled with a small case or book, and dropped it carelessly on the ground when he had drawn forth a bit of paper. Then he struck a match on his boot, and unfolding the paper with his fingers, turned the tiny flame upon it. "Read," said he quietly.

In the sudden blaze of light, the priest caught the words *four thousand*; then Trillon blew upon the match.

"Four thousand what?" gasped the old man. "From whom? For what? Monsieur, you shall account to me!"

"Soon done," laughed Trillon. "I have sold the *mas*. Created it first, mind you — you must grant me that; for the name stands so in the deed of sale. It is mine no longer. Instead, I have this little paper."

"What fool —?" thundered the priest.

"You may well ask. This time it is not myself. But there is no need of haste. You will know soon, and soon enough. It will be all over the village presently. Does your Reverence still withhold your gracious permission for the banns?"

"Wait — wait —" muttered the curé.

"Wait? Without doubt, I will wait all the night; but how does that affect my case?"

The twilight gathered close, but the young moon was riding high over the plain and showed the two men faintly to each other.

THE CONQUEST OF THE CHURCH

"Look you," said the priest. "You make much of your four thousand francs, got I know not by what scandalous means —"

"Nor need know!" Trillon could not refrain from an impish laugh.

"Eh, well," — the inflection showed anger. "You have a little money now, I grant it; but in a week you will be poor again. Who are you that I should trust to you the soul of a girl who plainly cannot take care of herself?"

"The more reason that I should step in. But who are you, to take upon yourself so entirely the welfare of a girl who is a stranger to you?"

Then an odd thing happened, and yet it was no more odd than that the priest kept silence, not at once finding an answer that pleased him; and into that pause, Trillon, with a curious sort of instinct that crept over him and served him well now and then at critical moments — though as often again it failed — read intricate meanings.

Said Father Gougoulin: "I have never thought there was need to go into the matter. I have persisted through a desire to give peace to the soul of Madaleno Borel, the elder. A dying woman's wish is not lightly set aside."

"And so, for her whim, you would sacrifice the happiness of two?" asked Trillon, more seriously than he was wont to speak.

"A whim?" cried the priest. "It had been her one hope for years."

"Why?" asked Trillon curtly.

He could see that the curé shrugged: "Is it so unnatural that parents should take that stand —?"

THE GOLDEN HAWK

He would have said more, but Trillon interrupted: "I think it is. It was never the wish of Borel himself."

"The girl had no dowry," said the priest curtly.

"*Sarnipabitune!* I lose patience. I have been over that ground like a horse in a treadmill. If there is no getting the truth out of you —"

"The truth," said Father Gougoulin, "is that Madeloun is dancing the *jarandoulo* up there at the wedding; and is ripe and ready to take any swain that offers, once you are out of the way; and the more for that reason do I think it not expedient for her to marry at all."

"Be still!" thundered Trillon. "I have small cause to respect your robe; but when you speak with a dirty tongue —"

The priest put out deprecatory hands. He was wondering hard in his sodden brain how he was ever to be rid of the fellow. "Look you," said he, "I will stretch a point. I will tell you something of the true reason. Madeloun was early destined by her mother for the convent by way of expiation —"

So far he had got when he felt Trillon's eyes upon him, fairly burning through the darkness. His words might seem strangely irrelevant: "And why is it, if one may ask, that you were left in this place to rot some thirty years ago? Such a thing does not happen without cause. And are we to suppose that immediate reform followed your transfer?"

The priest's hands were still stretched before him, and he moved his fingers incessantly and without purpose — there was light enough to show that.

THE CONQUEST OF THE CHURCH

Trillon waited long but had no answer. At last he said: "I wonder whether the joy of killing you would make up for Madeloun's distress?"

As the curé started back, Trillon caught at his sash and so held him. He himself found it strange how old memories leaped into significance, and half suspicions came to be full evidence, until the truth shone upon him as clear and incontrovertible in his own mind as the moon in the sky.

"No, I shall not kill you. I shall merely make you do what I want. You thought to trap me to-night, and you have walked into the noose finely. I interpret your words, and still more your silence, to mean that Madeloun is not the daughter of Auzias. Whose — it is better not to ask. Eh, well — who cares? But the fact leaves her free to roam the world with me — if she will. And she shall be put to the test before long . . . No, I will not denounce you . . ."

"Who would believe such a monstrous assertion on the lips of a vagabond?" said Gougoulin hoarsely.

"The village, I have no doubt —" Trillon was quite unperturbed. "And I likewise have no doubt it would be enough to get you unfrocked."

"Madness — madness —" was the sacerdotal murmur.

"I ask nothing of you," urged Trillon gently, "— or very little. Withdraw your objection and put it in writing. For Madeloun's sake — *hein?*"

The old man uttered inarticulate protests, vain words; but it was evident that his nerve was broken. His past life had not been conducive to any great moral effort in a crisis.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"Come," said Trillon, "we will let the dead rest; but if there is any expiating to be done, you shall do it — not Madeloun. It's easy enough for you to add a few more prayers — a few penances . . . Give me a thing to show the girl and set her conscience at peace, and I leave you alone after to-night. You shall eat and drink here twenty years more for all my interference. But if not —"

It seemed that Gougoulin had no desire to hear the converse. The very droop of his sash in Trillon's hand was compliant.

Trillon held it a moment, then he dropped it with disgust: "You are a gross old man. I will be finished with you quickly; for I have still much business to do to-night."

And what happened thereafter need not be told at this time.

CHAPTER XXXIX

A LITTLE DRAMA IN THE PLACE

THEY said in Castelar that same night that Madcloun's heart was as light as her heels. None among them had any idea of the anger that burned in her cheeks and lent her grace for the *farandoulo*.

The wedding-party was too large to dance within doors; and as a fitting conclusion to the solemnity and the feasting and the various other accompaniments of a new step in life, they adjourned to pass the evening and perhaps the night in the Place du Connétable de Montferrand. Oh, they were all there, Jano-Marïo in a skirt and fichu of lavender silk that her grandmother had worn at such festivities, Nerto in a yellow cotton print from Marseilles, and all the other village girls tricked out like butterflies. And the young men, quarrymen, shepherds, farmers, hatless and collarless, with sashes of red and blue and yellow, and sandals light on the feet — they left little to be desired for the spreading of sport and mirth. The mayor had swung the big tricolour from the town-hall, and had lent even the council-chamber of this august building for the laying out of food. And the music was

THE GOLDEN HAWK

pipe and *tambourin*, of course — how else should one dance in Provence? And when weariness settled for a time on the company, then the blind fiddler, who had been led that morning all the way from Fontvieille, came into his own, and played sweet old airs of the follies and joys of love until the maidens drooped their eyes with melancholy, and the young men clamoured again for the dance, or choked down the lumps in their throats with gay cries of, "Snail—snail—come out of your shell, little monk"; or teased the girls because they were not so pretty as the lasses of Sant Roumié, or so hard-working as the damsels of Cavaïoun . . . It was cool enough for the dancers on the terrace above the high rock; and warm and light within the Hôtel de Ville for those who talked of autumn chill and poured good wine into their marrows. And among these was Auzias, drowsy and content, having complained away his grievances and talked out the thoughts of his heart . . . And because lamps were few, there were rows of candles on the window sills within; and without, in the still air, hung the broad flames of torches, and swept into darkness the pale light of the high moon.

Madeloun had to put up with some teasing; and it fanned the heat of her strong wrath against Trillon.

It was perhaps a jealous girl without a sweetheart who reminded her that her man ought to be there on that occasion.

"To be sure," said Madeloun, "and no doubt he will come and fetch me if I stay long enough. But if a girl cannot be free, because she is fiancée" — she concluded with a shrug.

A LITTLE DRAMA IN THE PLACE

To others she gave elaborate excuses and explanations, wondering at the fertility of her own invention, and by no means recognizing it as the handiwork of the sun. But she was never sorry to turn to other matters; and evinced much interest in the village gossip, which at that time consisted largely of speculation about the movements of a mysterious old man, who had put up at the *Cabro, d'Or* the preceding night, and had departed for Arles, or further, that same afternoon. Be sure, they did not forget to tell her — the women — what their men had revealed to them upon coming home from the *Emperor of the East*, in regard to the mysterious conference of Trillon with the stranger. She could but pretend to know all about the affair, and refuse to give enlightenment for the present; but she worked her wits hard and could draw no more conclusion than they.

And while the dancing was on, she denied herself to no swain. Later, when the fun grew faster and more boisterous, it was generally Ramoun or Pèire, or both, who had hand of hers. They led her between them through the intricacies of the *jarandoulo*, to the immense amusement of all onlookers.

She was in full rebellion that night, and she gave herself up freely to the joy of the moment. When the elder women sought occasion now and then to draw her aside for a whispered warning, she turned an impatient ear, and acted more madly than before. Emilio from her corner, where she sat encompassed with sleeping children, sent her many a black and reproachful glance, but none reached her notice. Even the slow-going Jousè remarked

THE GOLDEN HAWK

at one point: "There would be no harm in your going home to bed, Madaleno."

She was leaning near the door then, letting Ramoun fan her with an old newspaper that he had found.

"Eh, eh," said Borel, turning querulously in his chair, "it's myself that would like to go home to bed — to a proper bed at the *Cabro d'Or*." He was not aware that he had spoken loud enough to be overheard; but neighbours have long ears. Jousè pretended to laugh as he looked round him: "I always said you and Madeloun would soon be tired of your gypsying at the Pit of Artaban. The sooner you come back and turn Christian the better."

"I am not tired of it!" flashed Madeloun, careless who heard. "And I am not coming back to turn Christian —"

Luckily for her the *tambourin* struck up, and Pèire came to fetch her for the last dance; and so her mad utterance was lost in a confusion of interest. Ramoun would not be shaken off; and it happened again that the two of them had her between them. It was a positive scandal, went the buzz of village talk, the way all three of them looked as if they were enjoying themselves, when —

When the ghostly horseman, who through the din had managed to ride up the village street without a sound, was suddenly reining his steed among the crowd; and there was kicking and striking out of sparks on the cobbles. People scattered, children were awakened rudely and screamed, the *tambourin* and the dancing stopped together, though the pipe went on for a bar or two, hanging forlornly in mid-air, unaccompanied. So sudden was

A LITTLE DRAMA IN THE PLACE

the apparition that it was not until some while after that it dawned upon the slower-witted that this was no ghostly affair, but Trillon on his white mule.

It must have been Madeloun's conscience that made her shrink with a little scream behind her taller companion.

Trillon said nothing, but he held the entire crowd in expectation of what he would do.

It was Ramoun who broke silence, saying with a monkey-grimace: "Well, monsieur, do you mean to chew us all up for our little pleasures?"

Trillon made no answer, but pushed his beast forward so that Ramoun was threatened with overthrow. He suddenly reached out and caught the bridle, trying to drag the animal down to the stones. There was a shrill cry from somewhere, but Trillon did not speak or change his expression. What he did to the animal none saw; but the mule rose suddenly on his hind legs, the shepherd was dragged, entangled, and thrown, and fell cursing with a gleam of steel in his hand, as Madeloun rushed forward to fling herself in the way. But it was Pèire who was quicker and turned the furious hand; and even so, he was more angry than Ramoun.

"It's a pretty return she makes you," he said — "trying to save you from the death you have earned. Have you told her how you offered to throw her away with a cast of the dice?"

There was a confused murmur of, "What? What?" and ejaculations. People pressed forward, forgetting their previous fear of the mule. Little dramas such as this are the breath of life in the nostrils of Castelar.

THE GOLDEN HAWK

Trillon made no answer beyond turning his steady look from Madeloun to Pèire.

"It is so true," said Pèire passionately, "that I call upon you here, before all the town, to deny it if you dare. And if you say no, I will kill you and send you to hell for a liar!"

Here several men deemed it wise to lay hands upon the orator. Two or three others had already seized Ramoun, got him to his feet, steadied him, and were keeping him within bounds.

One woman shrieked hysterically, "Call the guard!" while, indeed, this official was an interested spectator all the time, if not so active a worker as might have been anticipated.

Suddenly, Madeloun had uncovered her face, and was looking up at her man; and he in turn was looking down at her.

"Is that true?" she asked.

She fancied, but was not sure, that he nodded slightly.

"True that you were willing to gamble for me — to risk all — everything — on one throw of the dice?"

There could be no doubt about it this time; he nodded, and more than once.

A hiss and mumble of some strong emotion went through the crowd. One or two active citizens seized Trillon's bridle. It seemed as if there might be a riot. The mayor pricked out with sweat, wondering how he ought to interfere; and the guard retreated behind a pillar of the church, whence he could watch comfortably until such time as the arrested persons should be turned over to his hands.

A LITTLE DRAMA IN THE PLACE

Madeloun covered her face again, in a silence that for her meant more than tears.

The murmur grew, and there was a shuffling of people back and forth. The mule became restive and played the high-spirited charger, causing some alarm among those that held his bridle. Then there fell a hush upon the square because everybody perceived that Trillon was about to speak.

"I won," he said. "Remember that I won." And that was all.

Madeloun looked up again, magnificent in her wrath, as thought more than one youth that beheld her.

"No," she said, and lifted her arm in denunciation, "you did not win! You shall not win! Never, so help me God and the Holy Virgin —"

What happened then — ah, that was what Castelar never was able to piece together, or to make out to its own complete satisfaction. There had been a whirl and a great kicking about of hoofs and a scream; and the square was suddenly empty of mule and rider, and full of people running about and asking foolish questions. Even the guard came out from the shadow of the church and joined in the hurly-burly. Incidentally — after some moments of agitation — it was discovered that Madaleno Borel was also away.

In the end, the weaker ones, who in the press had been crowded against the outer wall, had the best of the situation. To be sure, they could see nothing for the flare of the torches about them; and the young moon shed no light into the deeps of the valley. But they had only to

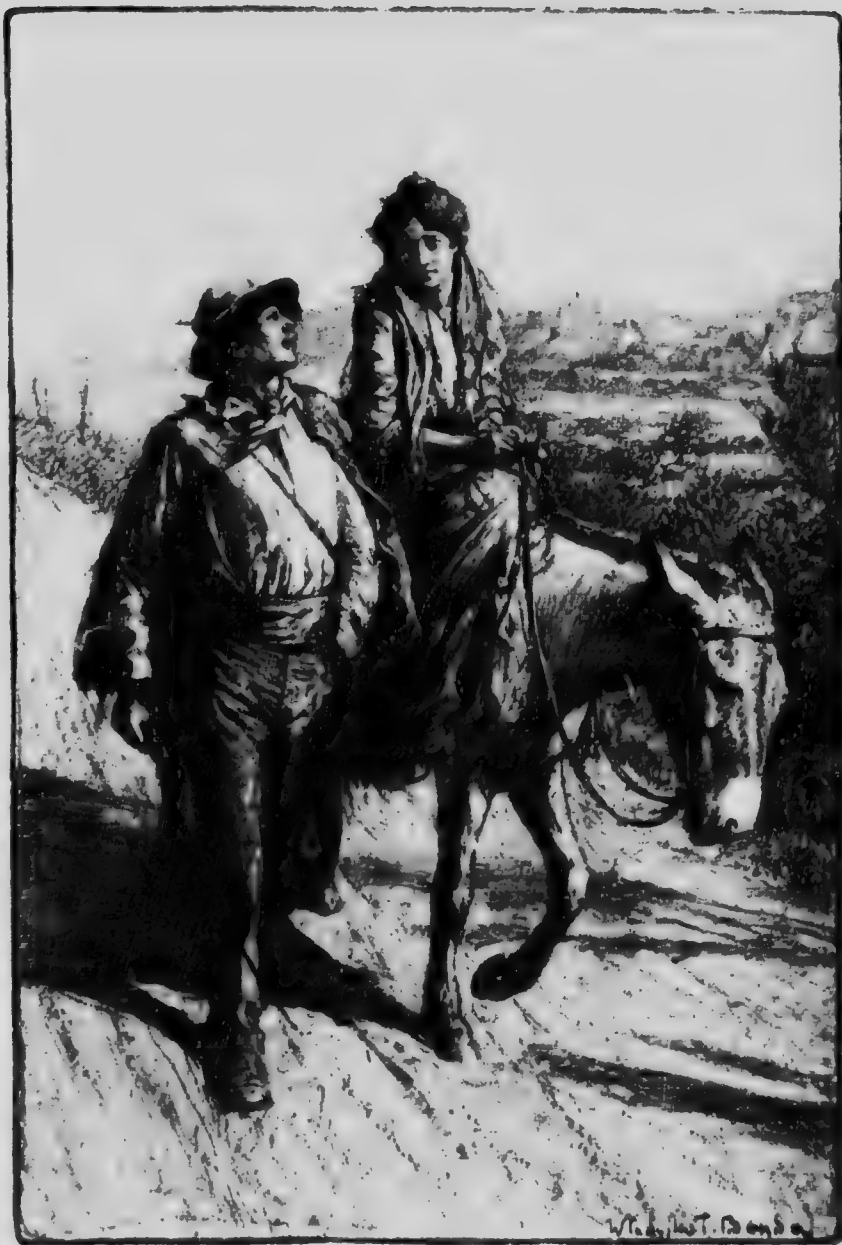
THE GOLDEN HAWK

turn about to follow with their ears the thunder of hoofs on the Roman road. Lively enough was Balin after some days of high feeding; and his downward progress — *balin-balant* — was marked by rattles and showers of small stones.

Long and anxiously they listened in momentary anticipation of a crash, until in the hush the sound grew faint as an echo; and when this gave way to the utter silence of the night, then Castelar, as one man, heaved a great sigh.

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CHAPTER XL

BALIN-BALANT

Balin-Balant—from side to side—went the steed, swaying and plunging through the night. Balin-Balant—that was his name; and well he earned it on this great occasion of his life.

With silence between them—a silence as close as the embrace that held them as one and left the mule to his own madness or discretion—they rode down into the plains. And when, looking over his shoulder, Trillon perceived the flare of Castelar as little more than a constellation in the sky, he gave a whoop of joy, and urged the flying beast, which even then raised a cloud of dust like a mist about them. And so they were whirled through the darkness of the plains between the dense black cypresses that now and again shot up at the one side or the other, like gigantic demoniac figures or sentries to turn them back.

“Never, so help me God,” swore the man—“God and the Holy Virgin, will I part from Trillon again until I lay a wreath on his grave and look about me for another husband equally good! Was that what you would say, Madeloun? By all that is holy, you spoke truth!”

THE GOLDEN HAWK

She lay still in his arms and would not respond to his kisses. "And if I satisfy you to-morrow?" he urged. "If I satisfy you on every point?"

She stirred a little then. "It is always to-morrow with you, Trillon," she said. He scarcely made out her words for the pounding of the hoofs on the road.

But when he understood, he laughed long and loud: "No — you are wrong! *This* is the one time. To-day is to-day. And since that is so, you shall be satisfied to-night. Ask."

She roused herself a little: "Where are we going?"

"Straight to Marseilles. We shall be there with the dawn, or not many hours after, if Balin-Balant holds out to Arles."

"And then?"

"South America, — any place in the world, my child!"

She shivered and drew away a little: "But how — how?"

"I am rich!" The words floated far into the night. "Rich! — rich!"

She was more frightened than before: "But how? Have you been —?" she could not bring out the name of the thing that she dreaded.

"No," said he, "whatever you mean. But I have sold the *mas* for four thousand francs."

She caught her breath: "For —?"

"For four thousand *francs*! Four *thousand* francs! Say it once — then perhaps you will believe it. I have the paper in my pocket; and I am to get the money in Marseilles. And there is some silver besides."

BALIN-BALANT

He freed one hand, to make sure of the jingle of coin in his pocket.

"Four thousand francs!" she repeated in a low voice, but did not yet believe.

"Shall I tell you why?" he cried exultantly. "It was because I would dig that well. Did you ever know my luck to fail? Eh, then, the well turns out to be the ruins of a temple to some heathen god — *negre-de-Dieu*, I forget the name, but I believe it was a woman! And so it was all bought up by a great wise man, — an antiquary, if you know what that is — he told me. And his name — you shall see that on the cheque to-morrow; but he is a *chevalier d'honneur*, so you need have no doubts of his money. But if you had, and they were just, and this paper were nothing, I could get more, now that I have you and would set my mind to it, my pretty little hedge-queen."

"I shall be a hedge-queen sure enough when all this is spent," said she, but with surprisingly little distress. And she even reached up and clasped him about the neck.

"But how shall I ever forgive myself," she continued plaintively, "for running away like this —?"

"Forgive yourself?" said he. "With Father Gougoulin's letter of recommendation here in my pocket? Forgive yourself? When here is his permission as safe and as fast as you yourself? Rest with that, and to-morrow you shall know more."

Thereupon she classed the whole affair among miracles of a high order, and broke down and wept with joy.

"Look now," said he, when he thought it time for her to stop. "Have you nothing more to ask?"

THE GOLDEN HAWK

"My father — what of him?"

"He is to go back to a civilized bed in a proper room, with the sheep and the fowls and the cart and the supplies at the windmill for a dowry; and enough it will be to provide him with comfortable maintenance at the *Cabro d'Or* for the rest of his days. I saw to that. Oh, I laid my plans properly. I understood that this was the only way —"

"Since when?" she interrupted.

"Since this afternoon, when the sale was completed before the notary," said he, unabashed. "And I carried it out on the moment . . . Ah, I knew your goings-on at the wedding, believe me. And now I have you netted fast." He whirled his thought about: "Are you sorry? Shall I take you back?"

Then she was sweet: "No. If we must be beggars always — still I am glad."

"Eh, well," said he, "it will not last too long even at the worst, for in time we shall come into the sausage-shop of Avignon, there is no doubt, and after that . . . To-day is to-day . . ."

And so they rode forth in the darkness, away from that grim ruin on the height, built by men who achieved their purpose a thousand years ago, out into the world that is a-making to-day. And everywhere they will have sunshine and love and hope; and what more do men need?

Long and foolish had been his first flight, the yellow hawk; but it was in quest of the mate, golden in his eyes, as golden as any might be. I doubt not that he will swoop again, with what success no man can tell; but he has faith

BALIN-BALANT

boundless in his unswerving luck. It may win him place and fortune among men; it may do no more than help him to prune to the best advantage sadly-clipped feathers. This will appear as the three Sisters weave the pattern of their web. But whether he end as ruler of a new state in South America, or as sausage-seller by the banks of the Rhone, his will be always the flight of adventure, for he will never shrink from rising straight into the sun of his desire.

“*Balin-balant*—they will go swinging through the world, up to the peaks of joy, down into the vales of tribulation, abroad in the winds of adventure, and when they have overpassed the sunlit fields of youth, and are come into the sober land of age, may peace be with them—and again peace!

THE END